"FURVERSION"

NO 11

Furversion #11

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Furverted Info
by Kyim Granger

Well, here we are, another issue of Furversion. Again I have an apology to make this issue. As with last time, it involves the lateness of some of the issues that got sent out. However, unlike last time, it was not due to my schedule or slow mails. This time it was an oversight on my part. As many as 20 issues failed to get sent out until a week before this writing since I oversold copies of the issue at San Diego ComicCon. I sold so many that I had to dip into the supply that was meant for the subscribers. People, please forgive me. Your accounts have been modified to show no cost for issue 10 for those that received their issues this late.

This Issue

Well, this time around we have part two of Chuck Melville's "Seeker's Quest", another installment of the Furry Forum, and a Furry Data entry by Steve Corbett about Zebra Team, as well as all the usual fun stuff.

Unfortunatly, this issue does not contain Speet's "Bottom End" due to constraints on his time. Expect to see more in future issues, though.

Convention Reports

Timecon '88 (July 29-31, 1988)

I do believe that this convention went well. We made a number of contacts and the feeling of the convention was (barring a few minor conflicts) very good. The Seventh Doctor was unable to make the convention, but the Brigadier and Peri as well as Johnathan "Commander Riker" Frakes(sp?) and Michael "Worf" Dorn from ST:TNG made for some very interesting pannels (all of which you could view from the comfort of your hotel room).

As to the furry parties, they were a bit quieter than what we have been used to, but they were, nonetheless, enjoyable.

San Diego ComicCon (Aug 4-7, 1988)

"It's been said before, but it bears repeating," when San Diego puts on a ComicCon, the covention center becomes a whole different world.

This year, ComicCon split the dealers room into two parts: One part with the "Big Names" and publishers, and the other with everyone else. More dealers in comic related merchandise than this writer has ever seen in his life.

One of the things of major interest to us fur fans other than the furry parties was the costume contest. In the costume contest were a number of very good presentations including a Bamboid! (and a leonoid photographer) and Tabbie La Fauve & Alicia from Xanadu! All four costumes were extremely good and the Bamboid was enough to put any fur fan in shock!

Nolacon 2 (WorldCon '88) (Sept 1-5, 1988)

From all reports this was a very good, if wet, convention. The furry parties went well, and many people from all over the place attended.

Upcoming Events - After Issue 12

*Orycon '88 - Portland, OR (Nov 11-13, 1988)

LosCon '88 - Pasadena, CA (Nov 25-27, 1988)

*Silicon '88 - San Jose, CA (Nov 25-27, 1988)

*Confurence Zero - January 1989

This is a planning convention to plan the first full-fledged Furry Convention. Now just in case people did not get the flyer last time, I will include it again with this issue. If, for some reason, you have not received a copy of the flyer, contact Rod O'Riley at the address listed for The Prancing Skiltaire on the address page.

* = Conventions that I personally will be at.

Another Plea

Yep, it is that time in my editorial page that I ask for your help. We STILL need stories, art and articles to make this 'zine work. We can only print what is sent in, so we need more stuff sent in.

Submission guidlines

I thought I would devote some space once more to a few guidlines for those of you that are submitting material for publication in the 'zine.

Art

1. Send me High-Quality copies or the originals of the art.

2. Make sure the art is furry in nature. (Contains characters which are furry or subject matter that would be of interest to furries.)

3. No true X- or XXX-rated art. We can show the parts, we can show the action, but not the parts in action. A good guide is that, if the world comprised totally of furry folk, would you see your art in Playboy, Playgirl or Penthouse? If so, then it will work in Furversion. If it would only fit in Hustler or one of the more explicit mags, don't send it to me for publication in Furversion. (Though I personally will still accept copies of the more explicit stuff for my private collection! <grin>)

4. Mark your artwork! I need several pieces of information on each piece of art sent in. They are:

a. The title of the piece. If you don't give me a title, I will label it "Untitled"

b. RETURN or KEEP (Whether I should send the piece back to you or not).

c. PRINTABLE or UNPRINTABLE (This tells me weither a piece is for my private collection or for publication in Furversion).

5. Sign your work! If it is not signed, it might get seperated from your other stuff and I might not know who did it.

6. As to text on artwork - As is the policy of the 'zine, NO 'comments' will be allowed, and this editor reserves the right to remove any and all such comments. (As to the definiton of 'comments': A comment is any text which is person specific and therefore not intended for the general readership)

Stories

1. Submit your work in one of the following forms:

a. Typed. Either double or single spaced. I can no longer accept hand written work as it takes at least twice as long to distingish each letter as it does with typed work. Computer printout is fine so long as the ribbon isn't too old and the print is readable.

b. Upload the story as an ASCII (text) file to my Electronic Bulletin Board. (At present I can receive files via both X-Modem and Y-Modem. More protocols soon.) Please do NOT send me a file containing control codes (i.e. Bold character designators, Italics, Underlines, etc.), I can only transfer text into the typesetting program.

Atari ST users, however, may send me either Publishing Partner documents or First Word (normal OR Pro) files. And most others I can at least convert to

something I can use.

2. Make sure your story has at least one major character which is furry. Since this 'zine is focused on furry characters, stories without such characters will not be printed.

3. Guidlines for the written word is a lot looser than that for art. However, part of the guidlines for art does hold. If it could appear in a mag like Playboy, Playgirl or Penthouse, than it can show up in Furversion. If you are in doubt, just send it to me and I will read it. If it is acceptable, I will print it, if not, I won't.

4. Number each and every page so I can find their order if they get dropped and scattered. I also suggest putting your name and the title of the story in a header or tailer on each page to further clarify just what goes where (This is not required).

5. If you already have art that goes with the story, please include it. If the art is not finished and you want me to hold the story until the art gets to me, tell me that too. Art is NOT neccessary with a story.

6. If the story is longer than 10 single spaced pages or 20 double spaced pages long, please mark "break points" (places where the story can be seperated into parts so it can be printed in instalments across two or more issues). A good guidline for this is aproximatly 15 single spaced or 30 double spaced pages per installment.

Note: Please do NOT send me your ONLY copy of your story as I will not send stories back to you.

Comic Strips

Comic strips are stories that are layed out with a series of artwork that tells the story.

All of the guidlines for artwork applies to comic strips. Please refer to that section above for information.

Articles

Articles are informatory written works that pertain to things of interest to fur fans. Such things can be "Mythsex" (Which appeared in issues 2-6) which addressed sexual visualizations of mythlogical furry-type creatures in art and ancient fiction; Featured Furries, which are character layouts descibing a character's physical attributes as well as his personality and a bit of info about the world around him; Furry Data, which is a interesting collection of information about the characters in or the worlds behind character in the stories which appear or appeared in issues of Furversion; Featured Furry Folk, which usually contains a profile on a race or species of creature that is furry and appears or appeared in an issue of Furversion. Generally anything that could be considered background can fall into this catagory.

Guidlines for articles are very close to those for written stories. So follow those guidlines above and you won't go far off the track.

The Title Contest

For those of you that might not know, we are holding a title contest for the 'zine. The prize in this contest is a lifetime subscription to Furversion and all related products (a $500 value). All entries must be in by January 1st, 1989. The purpose of this contest is to get some ideas for a new title for this fanzine. There is no guarantee that ANY of the titles will be used, but the prize WILL be awarded!

Duplicate entries will be judged based on the earliest postmark.

The following is a list of titles that have already been sent in:

Fur Visions
Pelage
Furry Times
Fun and Furry
Thinking of Fur
Furry Thoughts
Furry Tales (or Tails)
Mal Zine
Tales From the Furverse
Furry Events
Animailty
Bestarium
Bestia
Furre
Beaute' Furre'
Excellens Furre'
Pot Furrie
Forre Pourri
Fur Pourri
Cachet
Taliani
Fantanimals
Fanthropromorphics
Furotica
The Bawdy Beastiary
Grrr - The Adult Magazine for Funny Animals
Furry Fantasies
Pick of the Litter (or Pix of the Litter)
Fur, Feathers, Scales & Skin
The Midnight Zoo
Bunny Fluff
Of Morphs and Men
Furray!
Califurry Tales (or Tails)
Califurry Dreamin'
Meowchirp
Prowl
Beasts Bimonthly
No Paws for Alarm
Are We Not Beasts?
Lions and Tigers and Bears and Friends
Apawcalyspe Now
Furry Fables
Furry Stories
Furfan Frolics
Roar (subtitled, "The Call of the Wild")
Furzine

Okay, that's all of them so far. If a title YOU thought of is on that list and you didn't send it in to me, well, you should of!

Calendar Information

I am now accepting art for the second Furry Fandom Calendar. We need stuff that people can look at for a whole month and not get too tired off. Same guidelines as Art for the 'zine, just be sure to mark the art as "For the Calendar". One way or another, the calendar will be ready and for sale by Thanksgiving (LosCon and Silicon).

As to those of you that ordered Calendars and have not received them, well, the calendars sold out, so I decided that I would send you the Next calendar that we produced.

And those of you that sent in for the Furotica Calendar.... well, it never happened (one artist backed out of the project, then it kept getting shoved back on the back burner until it sort of burned up), so maybe some other year. Those of you that ordered it, please drop me a line telling me whether to apply it to the next Furry Fandom Calendar or to extend your subscription.

Well, that's about all I have to say this issue. Everyone take it easy and Keep It Furry!

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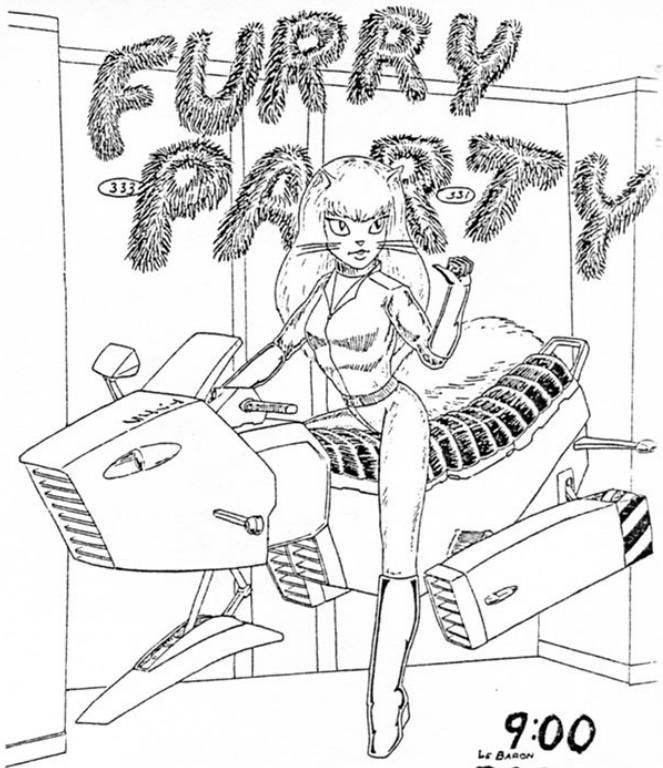
Come on up and see what we mean... the FURRY PARTY where the beasts go to get wild is here at Rosecon! Room 808, Friday + Saturday 7pm 'til ?

L. Rund '88

FUNNY ANIMAL FANDOM, UNITE!



9:00
LE BARON
ROOM 338

FURRY PARTY

FRIDAY NIGHT!
8:00

HOLIDAY INN HARBORVIEW
ROOMS #1115 + 1116

- ART
- STORIES
- ANIMATION + VIDEOS

(..AND JUGGLING FOXES, OF COURSE!)

SHON - INKS
FITS - PENCILS

Furry Party

the main event...

...rooms 1115 + 1116

...harbor view holiday inn

...after the masquerade (~9:00)

L. Rund 88

FURRY PARTY TONITE *
* Funny Animals / Anthropomorphics and their Fans.
SHERATON
Room 2925
9 PM 2100 HRS
SEPT. 4TH
BE THERE OR BE TOFU!
Feathers okay, scales okay, but smooth blue skin is a no-no!

SPONSERED BY GRAPHXPRESS, ROWRBRAZZLE AND FURVERSION

MUNCHIES, DRINKS, ART, ARTISTS
HELP kill A SMURF TONIGHT!!!

YES- THIS Is THE ORIGINAL REPRODUCTION

Just a short note to say thanks to all who have drawn party posters over the last few months.

First to Lance Rund, who did not only the Rosecon poster, but also the San Diego Comic-Con poster for the saturday night party.

Next is Bryce Nakagawa for the TimeCon 88 poster.

Bill Fitts drew the poster for the friday night warm-up party at San Diego Comic-Con.

Not knowing in advance who was going to be at Worldcon/Nolacon II in New Orleans this year was to say the least different, but when we arrived at Dallas to change planes and met Jim Groat waiting at the same gate, this was a pleasent suprise. He let us know that Fred Patten, Jeramy Morales and Steve Martin were going to be there, the plans for a party or two was quickly decided upon with the above results.

Steve Martin and Jim Groat co-created the friday night poster, while Jim went it alone to feature Red Shetland (tm) for the sunday evening bash.

Lastly Robert Haynie drew the door poster that graced the party room for the nights of the parties. Needless to say a great time was had by all.

Thank to one and all for there efforts. TKL

Furry Forum
by Tanith Tyrr

Well, folks, I'm back. Baycon was a blast; and I'd like to thank the perpetrators of the furry party both for putting on a great show and for putting up with my pet snake, which was evicted by my less than understanding roommates and had to be stashed in a drawer in the party room. (If anyone is wondering, the snake is doing fine. Soooo glad there wasn't any duct tape lying around, though).

For reference, I'm answering question #2 in my first article, which dealt with theories as to why some people are drawn to furry fandom.

For the record, I have been studying "primitive" ways and traditions for several years. I have worked with practitioners of both Native American and European mystery religions, and am an initiate of Wicca, a Pagan religion that began in Europe (probably centering in England) many thousands of years ago, that is still practiced today. One of the more common cross-cultural belief (that is, a belief shared by many very different, geographically isolated groups) is that of powerful animal spirits that function as protectors, medicine helpers, teachers, totems, and sometimes 'boogymen' or monsters. In general, I have found that when a belief is cross-cultural, indicating that each isolated group "discovered" it independently, there is definitely something behind it. Even our own culture is not immune; witness the numerous instances of totemism in modern America. A sports team is named the Detroit Tigers, or the Bears, or the Lions. Calling someone a "real animal" can be either complimentary or not, depending on the context of the remark. People are often labeled by animal names; you can call someone a fox, a dog, or a wolf. If you make a nasty comment about someone (perhaps you called him a pig), you have made a catty remark. The prevalent theme in all this name calling seems to be the identification of persons, either ourselves or others, with animals. When it is ourselves we are identifying, we tend to select from among a specific group of animals, which is, with very few exceptions, composed of carnivores. These are the animals with traits we admire, and by taking their names, we symbolically claim the power of that animal. Think about is for awhile - can you seriously imagine a football team called the Mice, Rabbits, or Deer?

Unlike the average person, advertising agencies are well aware of the unconscious totemism that seems to be deeply rooted in us all. They consciously identify their products with appropriate animals to create a desired image in the mind of the consumer. To own a Mercury Cougar, imply the commercials, is to have the sleekness, power, and grace of the animal. Animals, especially felines and canines, are also associated with sex. While we do not quite go to the length the Chinese do, drinking the powdered horns of animals for virility, we like to identify our sexuality with animals. The phrases, "animal nature", "he's a beast", and even "wolf whistle" call to mind images of strong sexuality.

A look into any pornography shop will reveal the inevitable novels of doggie lust. Girl meets dog, girl....well, you know the rest. What is interesting about these novels from a psychological point of view is that the reader gets a dog's eye view, so to speak. He is identifying with the dog. Rather than being a rival, good old Rover is simply an extension of his own masculinity.[1] Canine sexuality is most often associated with raw, uninhibited male sexuality. Felines tend to symbolize female sexuality. "Catty" is a term most often applied to women, and "sex kitten" is another term that has strong feminine connotations.

Other cultures, both modern and primitive, follow similar rules when it comes to totemism. Emulating or taking the name of an animal with desirable traits is seen as a way of introjecting or obtaining these traits.

Among groups that practice shamanism, a primitive religion which involves the association of the medicine person or shaman with various spirits through nonordinary or altered states of consciousness[2], it is typical for shamans to identify themselves with one or more animals. This practice may be extended to every individual in the group, or to the group itself. A common motif is the "vision quest" (I am borrowing a Native American term; this practice is common to many cultures), where a novice fasts, prays, and/or meditates, usually isolated from the rest of the group, to seek a helping spirit in the form of an animal. Once the animal is obtained, it is formally recognized, sometimes by taking the name of the animal as part of a personal name (Sitting Bull, Lame Bear, Shadowhawk, etc.). A clan or group may choose to identify with an animal (Bear Clan, Wolf Tribe, Cougar Society), and practice rites and taboos concerning the animal.

A shaman's personal bond with an animal, once achieved, is strengthened by ritual methods. Often donning the animal's fur or wearing some part of it as an amulet, the shaman will "dance the animal," literally letting the spirit of the animal take over. It is not uncommon for a shaman to howl, growl, grunt, purr, or scream in an appropriate fashion while imitating the animal's movements in a "dance." I believe that much of our zoanthropic folklore about werewolves and the like can be attributed to dim memories of this practice, as the ideal result of such a ritual is visualized by many cultures as the blending of shaman and animal into something that would seem remarkably familiar to furry fans. In the caves at Lasceaux, a famous archeological site in France, is a drawing of a stag-man, who is clearly half man, half ungulate. He has been dubbed "Deer Shaman" by the anthropologists. Other sites around the world reveal pictoglyphs deplicting men apparently in the process of transforming into animals. In Africa, drawings of leopard-men are found. Among the Navajo, there is a folklore of wolf-men, who are described as being more or less man-like, but who are excessively hairy and have muzzles instead of noses. Does this sound like something out of the pages of Furversion, or what?

Actually, not really. A brief examination of our magazine reveals a disproportional amount of female furries, while the majority of the anthropomorphic figures discovered deplict male furries. (Shame on you artists - let's see some more explicit MALE furry art!) Why the proportions?

Early shamanism was concerned primarily with practicalities such as successful hunting, good crops, and the health and survival of a tribe. Shamans were regularly consulted on such decisions as which way the hunting party should go to find game, whether a new plant or body of water encountered was safe to eat or drink, when to plant the crops, and other important issues. A shaman who was not right at least most of the time, or who failed to heal at least most of the sick, could look forward to one of a few things, depending on the culture. Death, exile (which was about the same thing), or at least deposing.

[1] Dr. Nancy Friday did an excellent commentary on this in her study of male sexuality, Men In Love.

[2] See Mircea Eliade or Carlos Castaneda for a better definition.

ex-animal trainer identified as a bid cat's challenge scream some time later, when I learned to consciously duplicate the noise. What concerned me at the moment, however, was that the entire bus station was giving me The Hairy Eyeball[6], and the tall, mean-looking black fellow who had caused me to lose my hard-earned control over my animal (that's another story) was backing away from me like he'd seen TWENTY tall, mean-looking black men with BLOODY KNIVES advancing behind me. In fact, I think he backed up into the wrong bus. At least, it wasn't the bus he'd been waiting in line for. It's sort of fun to think about three years later, especially in light of the fact that my teacher praised me for spontaneously "discovering" another link to my power animal. Have you ever tried to imitate an animal noise? What did it sound like the first time you tried it? Now do you see what I mean? However, having such a strong connection to an animal isn't all beer and skittles. Although I know my animal will be there to draw upon if I'm ever in real trouble (I almost pity the rapist that picks on me. Almost.), she often shows up when I am NOT, and I have a hard time convincing her to GO AWAY. She likes raw meat, she loves blood, and she thinks that sex means someone has volunteered to be her scratching post. Luckily, she prefers beef blood to human (it tastes better). Still, I'm not big on internal parasites (I cannot imagine a tapeworm as a power animal), and thanks to her other major quirk, I have accidentally HURT a few people. Boy, that was a lot of fun to explain afterwards. (Uh, Honey, it's like this, I've got this panther....no, not a real panther, uh...)

At three different martial arts studios, none of which had any overlap in membership, I have had people swear that my eyes have turned orange during prolonged bouts of sparring. I didn't believe it until I saw it myself in a mirror, under slightly different circumstances. Orange? Why orange? To this day I don't know; most cat eyes are green or yellow.

There are a lot of things I don't know yet; I'm still seeking some answers. It's not easy; a lot of the so-called "teachers" out there are New Age gurus out to play head trips or just to make a buck. Many of the traditional elders of the Native American tribes are suspicious, and rightly so, of whites seeking to learn about their practices. I have been lucky that one Navajo tribal Grandmother will speak to me once in awhile for advice, and that the Wiccan community has accepted me. Yesterday, I got a letter from another medicine person whom I met at a gathering the week before Baycon, offering to introduce me to the Chumash doctors he worked with. I'm looking forward to that.

I guess the world would be a nicer place if we could all get a little more in touch with our animal selves. My path, that of shamanism, is not for everyone. I began walking that path primarily because I had no choice - I had to master it before it mastered me. I'm glad now I opened up to my animal self; I sense things now I never could before. I can smell water about a mile or so away, or recognize a person in the dark by his scent and mental "feel." I am very much in tune with my natural environment, and I find that the range of how far I can "feel" is increasing. Animals respond to me, and I find myself understanding them at a very deep, primal level. I have howled at the moon, and heard the coyotes sing it back to me. And, like a half-forgotten dream, I know what they are telling me.

Supernatural? Not really. Not even impressive, by primitive standards. A Plains Indian could smell water from TEN miles away, and know instinctively where he stepped in the dark. The Inuit shaman has a through understanding of every cry the wolf makes, and uses his knowledge to "listen in" on wolves discussing the location of the caribou. (See Never Cry Wolf by Farley Mowat.) Either of them would laugh themselves right out of their respective moccasins or mugluks, if they heard me bragging about what I could do. In fact, one shaman did....but that's another story, best saved for some other occasion, like when Hell freezes over. Let's just say I keep my mouth shut in front of REAL shamans nowadays.

I firmly believe that the human animal is capable of a lot more than most people generally recognize or believe. What is crippling most of us is our estrangement from our animal heritage, and our refusal to accept the parts of ourselves that is that heritage. Perhaps - and this may be the most outlandish theory yet - furries are a way of reaching for those parts of ourselves. For our own, animal selves. Possibilities? Maybe.

Ms. Tyrr can be reached via the address on the address page. - Kyim

[6] You know what The Hairy Eyeball is. Ever been to a nice restaurant near the hotel in convention garb? Right.

"ALL RIGHT, MR. HOOD, LET'S SEE WHOSE STAFF IS BIGGER..."

"LASER TAG, ANYONE ?"

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Cat and the Cradle
by Paul Mantz

Prologue

Felix lounged in a comfortable but musty chair, in a cabin in the hills of West Virginia. Kitten, his companion for this and many previous weekends since they'd met in Geneva, leaned languorously over the back of Felix's chair, reading over his shoulder.

"I've been hired to find this person's child who's been taken, and return it to the real parents," she softly said.

"Y'know Ah don't like talkin' shop while I'm off duty," he mumbled.

"Yeah, I know, but I've got a question," she said with more alertness. "If you had to do the job, how would you do it without attracting attention from the neighbors?"

Felix put down his reading and thought about it for a moment. Then he said, half jokingly, "Well, if you got a van and a ghettoblaster, you could do a decent ice cream truck imitation."

Her eyes lit up. "Ice cream truck! That's perfect!," she purred, and gave him a hug.

"I hope you are doing this for the right resons," said Felix.

"Don't worry," she replied.

Part I

Black Ice, a teenaged hacker extraordinaire, flew to Los Angeles to introduce girlfriend Bobby (short for Roberta) to his parents. They made arrangements to all meet at a fairly nice restaurant. Well, B.I. and his parents showed up on time, but Bobby was very late. B.I. excused himself from the table, and he started making phone calls. Bobby's hotel said she called a cab at 6:45. The cab company said they made the pickup at 6:45, but the cab had yet to report. B.I. called an acquaintance he knew was in town, a Genevieve Cord, and asked for her help. She insisted on meeting B.I.'s parents, and playfully embarrassed him in front of them by masquerading as Bobby when she arrived. After dinner, they got down to the serious business of finding Bobby. The cab was abandoned at LAX, the driver was all over the inside, and Bobby was gone. B.I. set up his laptop, and started his searching.

Part II

Feather had retired from the superhero business and settled down. He taught archery at the local "Y," and he also looked after two kids. His wife, off on a business trip, wouldn't return until Sunday; it was now Wednesday. Feather had two additional youngsters to supervise, one of them Shadowcat's, and the other, Starling's. After a game of hide and seek, the kids looked for something else to do. Feather was on the couch, hoping they'd find something quiet to do, for a change. He then heard the ice cream truck so did the kids. "ICE CREAM!," they all yelled, and ran out the door. Feather, smiling, trotted along after them. He got to the truck and was pulling out his wallet, when the door hit him in the face, knocking him out.

Part III

Djinn and Black Ice called on their friends on Berkeley's New Guard, but they were all out, except for Shadowcat, who was minding the phone. She suggested they come up and discuss this with the rest of the New Guard, when they returned. Soon after this, she got a call from Feather.

Part IV

Feather awoke in the back of an ice cream truck, covered in melted strawberry ice. The truck was teetering on a cliff near Seal Rock. Extricating himself of this situation, he jogged the two miles back to the house and called the New Guard base. Shadowcat, hearing that a member of her family was in danger, made it to the house in an impossibly short time. They both returned to the scene of the crime. and investigated. Shadowcat bristled at an unpleasant scent, but didn't tell Feather about it. She deduced that there was only one person who knew what was going on.

Part V

Felix sat in the office, typing and watching the Big Board. Being the Presidential Guard's intelligence officer meant that he was connected to sources of information nearly all his waking hours. The Big Board was a large monitor screen, hooked up to a system that was linked to practically everywhere. Police, commercial nets, the Hero BBS (if that was still worth anything, these days) and the news services, all were infested by the system. It was set up to keep track of paranormals and their movements. It knew the secret identities of many paranormals. It noted the disappearance of Roberta. Felix watched that notice crawl off the screen with limited interest. He was busy with a report. His terminal's screen was turned down fairly dark, and the lighting in the office was dim. Felix preferred it that way.

His phone rang; he picked it up absentmindedly.

"S-2 section, Felix here."

Sounds of a crowd, and a distant, unintelligible ceiling speaker, echoed through cavernous corridors, before a quiet, furtive voice finally spoke. "Felix, Felix it's me, Kitten. It's important."

The old cliche came to his mind instantly. "I thought I told you never to call me at work," he said, cupping the phone.

"It's important, I've got a line on a major threat to the President."

"Okay," said Felix as his free hand pressed a button, "I have tape running. Go ahead."

The phone went dead. Felix inhaled sharply and jabbed at the phone. After a very short series of commands, he managed to get the number from which Kitten had called. After three rings, she answered.

"The tape is off now, go ahead."

"I really can't give you the details but you can meet me at Gate 15 in Orly in France, at midnight, local time."

"Orly, Gate 15, at 2400 hours," Felix repeated. "I will be there."

"Bye," she said, and the line went dead again.

Felix started cutting orders for an observation team to gather info. A plane was leaving Gate 15 to Beirut, Lebanon, at 0200 Paris time. He detailed the observation team to Beirut. This job had large implications.

Lebanon wasn't the anarchic center of a civil war it once was, not after a powerful group of paranormals known as Quadros had taken over Beirut and a few surrounding towns because of terrorists blowing up a hospital. Quadros already ruled most of North Africa, and their presence cooled the intensity of the civil war (especially after they put the terrorists' heads on stakes in public view). Quadros recognized no authority but themselves, and on a few occasions, they'd actively attacked institutions and organizations in the US. They were not officially welcome on US soil but it looked like Felix would have to go to their back yard. Felix continued to prepare.

Part VI

B.I. had very little trouble linking up with the Berkeley paranormals. They were friends of Gen, and their problems were similar. After some discussion, Shadowcat revealed

that she'd scented Kitten at the scene of the crime. Feather knew of Kitten, and he was worried. Shadowcat had numerous run-ins with her. At one time, Kitten had been part of Empire, the now-defunct British villain group. She'd left the team shortly before its demise. She'd spent some time in prison for the murder of President Reagan, but she'd escaped. She killed people for money, but she did it in a sporting fashion, usually hand-to-hand. She'd met Felix in Geneva, and they hit it off well. Shadowcat could think of only one person who could give them the information they needed.

Part VII

The secretary handed Felix the M.A.T.S. tickets for the Concorde. Air France was honoring them again, and speed was of the essence. He was putting on his jacket when the phone rang.

"Can you get that, Joyce? I'm outta here," said Felix as he adjusted his jacket and put the tickets in his pocket. He heard her attempt a brush-off.

"It's for you, I really think you should take this," said Joyce.

"Right. I'll take it in my office," said Felix as he returned to his chair. "Hello, make it quick, I have a plane to catch," he said rapidly.

"Felix, where are the children?," asked a not altogether friendly voice.

"I dunno, did you check a milk carton lately?," Felix responded coy.

"You know where they are, now tell me," demanded the voice.

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about. Who is this?"

"This is Feather, of the New Guard."

"I'm happy for you, but I do have a plane to catch. Bye." Before Felix hung up, there was a shuffling noise over the phone.

"Felix!," demanded the earpiece. This time it was a much more familiar voice, Shadowcat's.

"Hi, Mom," he answered sarcastically. Felix was not at all comfortable around Shadowcat. He didn't like her smug, self-righteous attitude, or her anarchic politics. She had bodyguarded a former President, but she unnerved Felix with her sometimes acid comments about Felix's employers and job description. She often offended Felix's very patriotic sensibilities. She tended to scold, hence the term "Mother."

"Felix, there has been a problem. Do you know where Kitten is?"

"No, Mom. I just got a phone call from her, that's all. I don't know where she is."

"Felix, she kidnapped some children. My family is very important to me, and no one messes with my family," Shadowcat said as if addressing a child.

"Well, I supose that's between you and Kitten. Now, I have a plane to catch so-"

"You're going to meet her, aren't you?"

Like a mother, it was nearly impossible to get away with lying to her, so he didn't. Instead, he just withheld copious amounts of info. This time, she seemed to have figured out what most of the situation was,so it would be difficult, "Well, yeah," Felix answered slowly.

"When and where?," she coolly demanded.

"Gate 15, Orly Field, at 2400 hours. Now, I have to go," said Felix as he hung the phone up. The earpiece protested futilely before the terminal click. Felix got up cursing, and quickly left the area. He obtained a weapons voucher from his superior, a quiet woman known by the code name Tengu. Felix was notified that the limo arrived while he was in the armory, filling a golf bag. Sprinting with the weight of equipment, he piled into the muted luxury of the limo. He barely made the flight.

Part VIII

Djinn's plane, a private jet capable of supersonic speeds, touched down at JFK for refueling, and to enlist the aid of any willing members of NYC's supergroup, AppleGuard. There was only one member at HQ when the call came in; fortunately, Timeseer was more than happy to assist, as he was yet another friend of Shadowcat. Even though the small jet was marginally faster than the Concorde, the fact that they had to reach Paris via New York, and make 3 refueling stops (NYC; Gander, Newfoundland; and Shannon, Ireland) before even getting to Paris, gave Felix a 6 hour lead.

Part IX

Felix met Kitten at 1800 hours as he stepped off the plane. Customs was a purely verbal affair, thanks to Felix's credentials. The airport was sparsely populated, compared to the more frequented Le Bourge't, but then again, tourism was down in this day and age.

They got a bite to eat at the coffee shop, the other patrons giving "l'Americain tres outre'" a wide berth.

"So, tell me. Now that I'm here, I suppose you should brief me."

Kitten swallowed her food and led Felix out onto the apron. There was almost no glow left from the sunset. "Felix, the threat is Shadowcat..."

Felix, expecting monumental catastrophe, was a bit shocked by the mundanity of the declaration. Shadowcat was not a threat, in the same way that a walk on tall scaffolding was not a threat; it was simply dangerous to be careless. Relays flipped as Felix de-rated the threat to the nation to a slight environmental hazard, as it had been before. He was prepared to leave on the next plane back to D.C., and would have if Kitten hadn't continued her sentence.

"...besides, she was the one who had Taylor killed."

Felix rarely showed any sort of emotional response. His co-workers had identified 3 expressions: wide-eyed attentiveness, disgusted annoyance, and (by far the most common) expressionless neutrality. Now he revealed a fourth expression, cold rage. As his "threat switches" pulled energy away from the part of his mind labeled "national security," new "switches" fed this energy to an unfamiliar part labeled "personal business," a part very unaccustomed to the energy levels it was now receiving. Shadowcat killed Taylor, This was no longer business. Instead, it was now personal vengeance.

Dr. Taylor was responsible for Felix's creation, and had stood by him whenever the Agency had wanted to retire him for its various reasons. Felix vindicated this trust in him by executing a nearly flawless string of difficult missions. After that, the Agency regarded him as a valuable asset. Dr. Taylor cared a lot about Felix, and he regarded Dr. Taylor as family, as Dad. Soon after he completed a difficult mission, there were a few days of chaos, as the President had committed suicide under less than decorous circumstances. During this time of chaos, a few days after Roger T. White was inaugurated, Dr. Taylor had been critically injured in a car accident. Felix, being in the line of work he was, believed that there was no such thing as an accident. He tried unsuccessfully to find out who was responsible. After that, he could only wait until Taylor either recovered or died. Wait, while the only person he could trust or respect deteriorated, Wait, while the coma stretched on for years, Wait, while Taylor became less like the father he knew, and more like a skeletonized puppet, a rag doll, a corpse, It was almost too much for Felix to bear. But bear it he did, sitting by Taylor's bed whenever his schedule permitted.

He was now in danger of breaking one of his own rules of conduct, by not approaching the job in an antiseptic, dispassionate manner. Unbridled hatred has mighty power.

"Okay. I think I have a plan," answered Felix in the clipped near-monotone he used when under stress or severely distracted.

"Fine," Kitten purred soothingly, not liking the way his muscles tensed. "Is there anything I need to do?"

"Not yet. I need a motorcycle." He quickly obtained a common scooter. Changing into dark clothes, he shouldered the golf bag the customs agents had declined to look at. Kitten watched while the tail light of the scooter diminished as Felix headed for the runway. Kitten had told him to look for a Cord Industries Sabre II, at approximately 0105 hours. At the end of the runway he set up a concealed position near a red and white checked shed. The blinking directional lights stood on skeletal supports, like dead trees. His position gave him a shot between the banks of lights off to one side. He unlimbered one of the firearms he'd brought, pulling the fake golf club head out of the barrel.

The Barret Light Fifty was a sniper rifle designed for targets at ranges of one to two miles. With the optics it currently sported, he could hit a 1 gallon paint can at one mile or the passenger compartment of a car, at two. The Barret Company had made their pitch to the Government several times, but they'd only been slightly interested. The Light Fifty was chambered for .50 Browning machine gun ammo, which meant that a wide variety of special purpose ammunition was already available. It fed out of a 10 round magazine, and weighed 25 pounds altogether. Felix was able to obtain 3 magazines of depleted uranium-core armorpiercing rounds from a Navy stores allotment. His plan: kill the pilot as he attempted his landing. That would pour a load of flaming wreckage full of paranormals all over the runway. The possibility that he might drop the plane on himself did not bother Felix. He waited.

Part X

Timeseer was almost as paranoid an individual as Felix was. He had an uneventful day at the switchboard, until Shadowcat called. On the plane, over the Irish Sea, he was unsuccessfully trying to nap. Shadowcat had briefed him, but there were too many unknowns. This is what his mind was working on when he finally dozed off. A terrific jolt got his attention, and he looked forward to see the plane's insides twisting and buckling from some impact. Then the fuel ignited, and the wavefront from the fireball passed over him, blistering and blackening his skin and searing his eyeballs out of their sockets. He screamed, inhaled fire, tried to scream again.

And woke up screaming in his seat.

He stopped, but everyone was looking at him. He took a moment to compose himself before describing his vision. After some discussion they discarded the possibility of a bomb, but Timeseer wasn't sure if his vision applied to the plane he was currently on, or some other. His visions tended to be imprecise, effective only on an instinctive level. After further discussion, they decided to land at Le' Bourget and take a cab across Paris to Orly.

Part XI

Felix had waited until 15 minutes after their supposed arrival. The noise of the landing jets was hard on his sensitive ears, and he had sighted in on each of those jets until he could identify it as a non-target. Now, with his nerves wound as tight as they could be, he returned to Gate 15 with his golf bag at 0120 hours. He only gave the briefest of nods to Kitten, who melted into the shadows. There were few passengers, and no law enforcement personnel around. This looked nice and quiet. There was an immense pile of luggage belonging to a group of Arabs who napped at Gate 20; Felix nestled into the pile, and unlimbered the Barret and some other equipment. He was unseen.

Ten minutes later Feather, a man in a dark suit, an oriental boy of about 14, and a nubile red-head in a shocking blue dress turned the corner and slowly started walking up the hall.

Feather and the boy stopped at Gate 15, while the red-head walked slowly up the center of the hall. Shadowcat was nowhere to be seen, but she was nearby: her scent was unmistakeable. The man in the dark suit passed out of view. Felix was tracking on the red-head.

"Felix, what's going on here?," asked Shadowcat.

Felix whirled about and fired at a dark, moving shape. Timeseer was folded in half by the bullet impact, and dropped a few feet away in a senseless heap. When the echoes died away after the expended brass finally ceased chiming as it bounced across the hall, Shadowcat spoke again, asking the same question. Felix used his ears to track on her voice, and he fired. He finally saw her, and also saw that he'd missed, blowing a hole through six inches of concrete.

He yelled, "You messed with MY family! Bitch!" But she wasn't there.

Feather nocked, drew and let fly. His arrows had a rubber ball tip, stun arrows, as Feather will not kill. The arrow distracted Felix enough so that he did not fire on Gen as she fled down the corridor to Gate 15.

Felix snarled, and brought the gun to bear on Feather.

Djinn screamed, and Black Ice, the Oriental boy, yelled, "Shadowcat! Kitten's over here!" Shadowcat put all thought of concealment behind her as she sprinted up the corridor. Felix fired again, this time scoring a grazing wound. The linoleum started to collect a trail of dime-sized spatters of blood. She never looked back, and soon she passed out of his field of fire. Feather switched targets to something out of Felix's view, in the waiting area of Gate 15. Kitten could hold her own end well enough. Felix had downed one and wounded another, now he had to arrange their departure. He slipped away to the outside.

Part XII

Kitten had elbow-slammed Djinn, and had expected Shadowcat's arrival. She stood there and judged the distance to the exits.

"One move and she gets it," said Kitten as Shadowcat sped into view. Shadowcat slid to a halt.

"Where are the children?," asked Shadowcat. Kitten just laughed, and left through a convenient exit. Shadowcat chased her. Kitten needed to get Shadowcat away from her friend, and when she figured she'd run far enough, she turned to fight. They yelled at each other, they traded insults and threats, then they came to blows. Both combatants had only muscle and claws to fight with, and both regenerated. It was a vicious fight, and the floor soon became quite slippery. Perhaps because of her gunshot wound, Shadowcat was the first to fall; Kitten went to find Felix. The others treated their wounded. Timeseer came to and was surprised to find that all he'd get was a bruise. He hadn't known that he was apparently bulletproof. Djinn would have a nasty bruise, but that was about it. Feather suggested that they find Shadowcat, and quickly.

Part XIII

Felix was waiting outside. Kitten staggered down the stairs. She'd been wounded, and blood still pattered to the ground.

"Kitten, I want the truth," Felix said softly.

"I told you, Shadowcat ordered Dr. Taylor killed, I'm telling you the truth!"

Felix looked at her silently. There was something in her tone of voice that wasn't right. Shadowcat and Timeseer walked out across the apron towards the couple.

"Felix, we've got to go," Kitten pleaded.

"The truth, Kitten," he said as he brought the Barret to bear on the approaching paranormals. "The truth, then we go."

Shadowcat approached to a distance of 20 feet, stopped and sat down. Timeseer, still wary of the gun, kept back a bit. Felix watched them, but did not move. Shadowcat gazed levelly at Felix. Felix returned the look glacially, but the muzzle brake lowering on her indicated his intent.

"Felix," said Shadowcat tiredly. "I didn't attack Dr. Taylor. You know me, at least a little. I never would have 'ordered' it done. If I did do it, I would have ripped his throat out myself. It...i-it would have been quick."

Felix just looked at Shadowcat, unmoving.

Soon the rest of the opposition showed up. They, too, kept their distance. Felix and Kitten were not that close together, and Felix took a couple of steps back, possibly to cover all of them, maybe to cut and run.

"Felix, we gotta go," Kitten pleaded. "These monsters'll kill us!"

"No. We just want some questions answered," said Shadowcat tiredly. "Do you mind, Felix?"

"Go ahead," said Felix with glacial calm. "But when you're though, she is coming with me."

Feather cleared his throat.

"Felix! If you love me you'll kill them," Kitten said almost pleading. This had almost the opposite effect on Felix than Kitten wanted.

Felix was a little disturbed. "Love?" He didn't think that his feelings for her ran that deep. Sure, she was good company and he cared for her a little, but this declaration along with the lies(?) was making Felix a bit indecisive. He continued to hold his fire.

"Doctor Taylor was out Father, Felix!" said Kitten with a subdued, smoldering voice that rose in pitch as she continued. "He made both of us. She was responsible for what happened to him. She must die."

The word INCEST marched across his mind in big red letters. Dr. Taylor was a somewhat religious man, and he had passed some of it on to Felix. Felix felt unclean. "After all those nights of--" He clamped down viciously on that line of thought. He should have seen the evidence before. Taylor's positive belief that Kitten had not murdered Reagan and how hard the "Guilty" verdict had hit him, the fact that she and Felix were of such similar construction, and even their similarity of outlook, all that evidence when seen now seemed so obvious. He was beginning to feel more than a little stupid, but there were armed hostiles only 20 feet away. He held his fire.

"I'm not staying for this," exclaimed Kitten, and she bolted. Feather let loose with a rubber-tipped arrow, and dropped her on her second step.

"Hey," barked Felix as he almost fed Feather a .50 calibre uranium surprise.

Djinn walked over to the unconscious Kitten, and placed her fingers on Kitten's face. It didn't look comfortable for Kitten, but Felix waited. All sorts of alarms went off in Felix's head as he realized that Djinn was the mysterious "telepath" that Government memoes would occasionally refer to in fearful language. Outwardly, he still remained a figure of alert, glacial calm.

"The children are each in a coffin. They have oxygen," said Gen slowly. She took a deep breath and continued. "All five coffins are in a cargo container, in the luggage compartment, marked as 'Medical Supplies'. There is a sixth coffin. It contains a bomb. The bomb is linked to an altimeter, which arms it. A timer that will deactivate it after a certain time has passed. There is an inertial navigation system aboard that will also detonate the bomb if the plane is diverted from its course."

Feather had tried to stop this plane from taking off earlier, but he'd failed. His mood soured. He could not nock an arrow while Felix was covering them, so he stood and fumed.

"Okay. You have your information, but I have a question," said Felix quietly. "Who really killed Dr. Taylor?"

Gen looked up. She had a most unfriendly smile. "I did, Felix. And I enjoyed it."

Felix acted with lightning-fast instinct. The Barret's tanklike muzzle brake quickly snapped into line. Black Ice screamed, "NO!," and leapt into the line of fire. The muzzle flash, though amply reduced, still lit the scene, leaving a photo-like image imprinted on all of their retinas. The blast was deafening. The Barret did what it was supposed to do; Black Ice spun in the air and gracelessly flopped to the ground. Blood spattered everywhere. Black Ice's heroic effort did what it was supposed to do; the meat, bones and semi-solids that B.I. had so thoughtfully interposed in Gen's behalf deflected the slug a few degrees off course. Gen was hit only by a harmless spray of blood.

Before Felix could fire again, Feather let loose an arrow that lodged in the Barret's barrel.

"Fine! Don't need a gun to finish this," said Felix as he dropped the Barret and deployed his claws. "Gonna die, bitch!"

Gen held Felix's gaze and continued. "Yeah, I enjoyed it. Death would have been too easy. No, leaving him a vegetable was one of my better ideas. Now I can walk into Walter Reed any time I want, and stir his mind like soup."

"Gen, no!" said a very worried-sounding Shadowcat.

"Did you ever have those nightmares where you never seem to wake up?," said Gen in a mock-cheerful tone. "Well, in Taylor's case, he can't. It's been going on for years, and I can make it worse any time I choose. Isn't that fun?"

Felix advanced, little rationality in his eyes, his teeth bared. He stopped suddenly, as if he hit a wall. Surprise crossed his face.

"And there is nothing you can do about it," continued Gen. "I want you on all fours, crawling over here so I can scratch behind your ears, kitty cat."

Felix dropped to his knees, the rage and hate in his eyes only intensifying.

"Here, kitty, kitty, kitty," beckoned Gen.

Felix dropped to hands and knees, straining to resist this compulsion with little or no success. His claws scraped on the pavement as he moved forward.

Shadowcat limped forward and blocked Gen's line of sight. Felix was abruptly released.

"I will see you dead," whispered the panting Felix.

Gen giggled and said, "You can do nothing, I can easily snuff you out."

"Take yer best shot, bitch, but I'll live to piss on yer unmarked grave," he said, but the threat seemed as hollow as he felt.

"Felix. Please leave," said Shadowcat, almost with a slight tinge of sadness.

Felix got to his feet in a shaky series of moves. "Doesn't have to be me that does it, there are others," he mumbled.

Again Gen giggled with even more apparent humor. "Don't you think they've tried?"

"Felix, please leave, now," said Shadowcat. Felix walked over to the Barret, pulled the arrow out, and stuffed it into the golf bag. He slung the golf bag over one shoulder, and an unconscious Kitten over the other, and started to walk away.

"G'bye, kitty," said Gen in a cheerful, seductive tone.

Felix paused, then continued. When he thought they were no longer paying attention, he drew the .44 magnum Desert Eagle pistol and fired two shots at Gen. The bullets passed harmlessly through her, and she started laughing. Felix stared at the gun and gave a long, ragged sigh.

"Damn things never seem to work any more," mumbled a very defeated-looking Felix. He now gave up and left. Black Ice, who had been conscious during this exchange, was now almost convinced that his move had been a mistake. The shock of the bleeding was making him very light-headed. Timeseer, who had locked all his muscles during the confrontation lest he attract undue attention, relaxed and moved quickly to aid the downed Black Ice. Feather re-entered the terminal for meat to fuel Shadowcat's regeneration. Gen stood by silently, and daintily wiped the blood from her face with a hand. An ambulance soon arrived to take the gravely wounded Black Ice to proper medical facilities. He wondered what his parents would think.

Part XIV

The job was not finished. Shadowcat called another of her contacts, this time the Legion Extraordinaire, the official French superhero group. Its leader, Le PhOnix, a very brave but not necessarily bright superhero, enthusiastically offered his help and transportation. Soon, the group was winging its way to wards Beirut.

The Legion's jet, like Gen's, was supersonic, but it was also larger and better equipped. They soon caught and passed the airliner. The group requested permission to land, but this was denied. Shadowcat sent a mayday and requested emergency landing privilege; this the tower granted, mostly to preserve its nation's shaky diplomatic stature among the peoples of the world. The jet landed on the bomb-scarred (but still serviceable) runway at dawn. The group was ordered to maintain its distance from the terminal. However, in the Legion, they think of everything, so the group exfiltrated the aircraft and snuck across the apron just as the sun cleared the still-contested mountains to the east. Incapacitating some baggage handlers and stealing their uniforms, the team were ready when the target airliner touched down at 0815 local time. They actually did unload most of the plane; when they got to the cargo box, they drove it to their plane and loaded it aboard.

As they were cracking the seals on the coffins, a slim, red-heaired woman and a very large, muscular man appeared behind them. (I never got their names, but as Shadowcat knew them and treated them with respectful familiarity, I assume they were members of Quadros) The woman politely inquired as to the nature of their "emergency;" Shadowcat answered that there was a bomb in the lone unopened coffin. The woman shrugged, and quickly disarmed it. She wondered aloud, "Why a bomb?" Shadowcat said that the children had been kidnapped, and that they were just recovering them. Given Quadros' official stand that crimes against children were a capital offense, the heroes were judged to be officially correct in their actions, and they were officially permitted to leave. Now. Without delay. So they left.

Timeseer was dropped off in NYC. I don't think he ever wanted to leave again; his farewell to Gen was cool and noncommittal, at best. Black Ice had to stay in France until he recovered. Gen returned to Southern California, but not before dropping off Shadowcat and Feather. Feather got home 30 minutes before his wife did, and the kids said that nothing happened. Except one, who piped up about getting some ice cream, thereby knocking about 5 years off of Feather's lifespan.

But, what about Felix and Kitten, you ask?

Part XV

Kitten never left Orly. Her diced remains were disposed of in the bottom of a food service dumpster if anyone cared to look, but no one did. In his mental "after action checklist," Felix realized that there was no way she could be allowed to live. She'd used the resources of a large Government agency for a purely personal vendetta. The fact that he'd been used like a pawn hurt, but that was nothing compared to the weaknesses she had exploited in him, weaknesses that could possibly be used to cause him to act against the Government which he held above all other things, himself included. He disposed of her and quickly arranged a M.A.T. flight back to Washington, D.C. On the way back, he composed a report in the spare, dry Bureaucratese that could occasionally obscure instead of clarify. It basically said that Felix went to France, sealed an information leak, and returned.

Genevieve Cord was another problem entirely. He quickly drew up a threat analysis, based on the available data. It was a good piece of work, but Tengu dismissed it as being of insufficient priority. They might address it at the next quarterly meeting. This did not make Felix happy, but he continued to do the best job he could. Off duty, Felix became very distant, and occasionally snappish. He would often sit in his quarters, burning with a corrosive hatred for Genevieve Cord. He no longer thought that visits to Dr. Taylor would do any good. He finally came to the conclusion that personal relationships were a weakness that the enemy could, and most probably would, exploit.

He became even more glacial over the next few weeks, but soon after his return, he arranged to have a postcard put in Shadowcat's dead drop.

It asked but a simple question: "Why?"

End

Harald Wes

They consulted a public terminal, found that there were two places: one in the midst of the seamy side of the port city; the other, a restaurant and a night club that was fairly close by. It overlooked the ocean and the beach.

Dinner was excellent, the local cuisine a welcome change from the synthesized meals onboard a starship. A band played equally synthesized music, apparently the current style on the planet. When they took a break, England approached the band leader.

"Can you play any swing or jazz?" he said.

"What?"

"Sing, Sing, Sing," said England. "Moonlight Serenade, Pennsylvania 6-5000, In the M--"

"Never heard of any of those."

"Think hard," said England, slipping the man fifty credits.

"Give me ten minutes," said the band leader.

When the band returned to the stage, the band leader gave England a nod. Some of the musicians still looked puzzled, but they managed to start playing 'Sing, Sing, Sing'. A smile lit Tanya's face as she recognized the melody, then she raised an eyebrow at England. He grinned sheepishly, shrugged.

"Shall we dance?" she asked.

"Ah - I don't know how," said England. "At least not to this kind of music."

"Then it's my turn to teach you."

And she did. The basic steps were simple enough; as England became more comfortable with them, Tanya began adding flourishes to her own movements. Some were downright seductive given the way she was dressed. Caught up in the music, she didn't seem as self-conscious as she had been earlier that afternoon.

The band's performance became less stilted as they found how easily the music flowed. Other couples were hesitant at first, but several stepped onto the dance floor immediately, perhaps intrigued by the close contact between dancing partners. A group of Starfleet cadets were apparently familiar with the music and the dance style. England was relieved that they didn't seem to recognize Tanya or himself.

The band took a break; Tanya and England returned to their table. They sat close to one another; England found himself holding her hand as they talked quietly about anything but Starfleet and their duties.

When the band returned, they danced again. The floor was even more crowded; those who weren't dancing watched. England and Tanya left before the set was complete. As they left the restaurant she latched onto a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

They walked along the beach, their arms around one another, looking at the stars. After awhile, they stopped. England set aside the hat and cane as Tanya opened the champagne. A quick pulse from his phaser turned some driftwood into a warm fire.

Not that it was necessary; they found other ways to keep warm.

England felt Tanya's lips brush against his, then continue along his neck and down his chest. She looked up, her eyes sparkling mischievously.

"I thought that might wake you up," she said.

"Wasn't asleep, just thinking."

One of her hands brushed against his inner thigh, teasing him.

"Hmm. I like those thoughts," she said as he responded to her touch.

They made love slowly, sharing deep and intimate kisses. England realized that this was not just a casual fling for either of them; he was falling in love with Tanya.

Later, when they returned to Tanya's hotel room, they heard muffled voices from inside. England drew out his phaser and stood ready; Tanya keyed the lock sequence and the door slid aside. England was inside dropping into a roll, bringing himself up short when he saw two uniformed Starfleet officers, one an Andorian. They had both spun with phasers in hand; England realized he couldn't get them both, and there was no time to reset his phaser for a wider angle.

"Chase! Maradus, no!" shouted Tanya.

"Captain!" said the Andorian.

"At ease, gentlemen," said Tanya. They lowered their phasers and England stood up slowly. "Now, perhaps you could tell me what you're doing in my room?"

Despite the traces of sand in her hair, the slight flush in her cheeks, and her unusual attire, Tanya's comand presence was undeniable.

"Ah, we... tried to contact you," said Chase. "When you didn't answer after several tries, we decided to investigate."

"Had it occured to you that I might not wish to be disturbed?"

"You hadn't notified us to that effect, Sir, and you know I would prefer your staying onboard the Invincible." said Chase.

"We'll talk about this later, Randall," said Tanya. "And unless a Klingon battlecruiser drops by for a visit, I'd like to spend the remainder of my shore leave undisturbed."

"Yes, Sir," said Chase. He and the Andorian, Maradus, left quietly.

"Oops," said England.

"Chase does tend to be a little overzealous at times," said Tanya. "But I can't think of a better Chief of Security. He and Maradus are almost two-of-a-kind."

England caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

"Ugh. I need a shave. I'll have to go back to the Potemkin."

"Don't be silly," said Tanya, slipping her arms around him. "We can order whatever you need from the hotel computer."

"But --"

She silenced him with a kiss.

"Don't argue. I'm going to use the shower and I expect to find you here when I come out."

"Ta--"

"Better yet," she said, unbuttoning his shirt. "Come join me."

Afterwards, Tanya suggested shopping in the spaceport concourse. While many of the stores were overpriced, she knew how to bargain for a better price than what was usually listed. She bought a number of things not available through ship's stores; scented oils, colorful silks and jewelry.

While she was engrossed in bargaining for one item, England examined a sparkling blue gem, a fire opal, which could be mounted in a setting of the customer's choice.

"That would make a nice ring," said Tanya, looking over his shoulder.

"Is that how you want it? I was thinking of buying it for you," said England.

Tanya's eyes widened; it wasn't an inexpensive item, but the sales clerk marked England's credit chip without a second glance. Tanya indicated a slim gold chain for the girasol; it was a body necklace, designed to be worn around the waist.

"You can help me put it on later," whispered Tanya into England's ear.

Tanya and England were enjoying a quiet dinner, although nothing quite as extravagent as the night before.

Tatiana
by Robert C. Lai

It was almost dawn. And although the sun would not touch the beach for several hours, its presence began fading the stars from view. The fire they had lit hours ago had died; as Tanya snuggled closer for warmth, England closed his eyes and let his thoughts drift back to the day before, when they had met for the first time.

Far from being an officer with a woman in every starport, England hadn't expected anything but another dull three days of shore leave. The port was a typical planetside facility, its services catering to both Starfleet personnel and civilians. The fact that the bar was crowded so early in the afternoon spoke well for its reputation. England turned down the invitation of a group of cadets and junior officers from the Potemkin, seeking a quieter table or seat at the bar.

He saw her in profile, seated at the far end of the bar, alone. Her white tunic marked her as a Command Division officer, but she wasn't wearing the jacket which bore her rank insignia. England silently admired her figure; the gentle swell of her breasts; her shaply, dancer's legs, her equine tail ...

Tail? Intrigued, England found himself moving closer.

"May I join you, sir?" he asked.

"Please," she said. "What would you like to drink?"

"Um ... something mildly alcoholic."

"White wine, then," she said, signalling the bartender.

Her eyes were violet; England found them curiously magnetic, reflecting both an officer and a beautiful woman.

I can't believe I'm doing this, he thought. Not that England considered himself unattractive; he was well aware that women considered him good looking, with an athletic frame, dark brown hair and slate grey eyes. *Just another dashing young officer.*

England sipped at his wine when it arrived. Conversational gambits seemed to be particularly elusive; they sat silently, watching each other over their drinks. He saw another couple abandon the holographic game console, leaving a pair of knights in shining armor to fade away, their swords still crossed.

"Do you play?" he asked, nodding towards the console.

"I've never learned any of the games," she said.

"Come on, I'll teach you."

"All right," she smiled.

They moved to the console and England indicated the listing of programs available. She studued if for a moment, then selected the aerial combat or "dogfight." The planes were from the early 20th Century, double-winged biplanes. She would fly a Sopwith Camel, he, a Fokker Spad V. The controls were easy to learn, but slightly more difficult to master.

England held back at first, being an experienced player. He noticed that she was using standard starship flight patterns as she tried to evade the Fokker. He switched from conventional flying techniques to the Klingon tactics he'd learned during his time in Military Operations. He was surprised at how quickly she recovered, despite the fact that he was closing in on her from behind. A quick roll to starboard carried her away from his line-of-fire.

He brought the Fokker up and around, then began a head-on run towards the Sopwith Camel. She countered by rolling her plane while firing, the spray of bullets shredding the struts that held his wings together. He fought to pull the plane up and glide, but it spiraled down in a trail of holographic smoke.

"That was excellent," he said.

"Not quite like a starship."

"There are few things like a starship," he said. "May I have the pleasure of knowing who shot me down?"

"Captain Tanya Gorbachev, USS Invincible."

"Lieutenant Commander Anthony Christopher England, Potemkin."

"Please, Commander, let's not be needlessly formal. Call me Tanya."

"Of course, Cap-... Tanya," said England. "You can call me Anthony or Tony - it doesn't matter."

Tanya signalled the bartender for refills. England punched up one of the less frequently used programs on the console, an abstract light show that could be choreographed by the players. A rainbow mist coalesced over the imaging unit, the program waiting for a music selection before continuing. England selected one of his favorite classical music works from old Earth, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', then paused and asked Tanya if she had a preference in music.

Tanya quickly punched in a selection and the digitized sounds of clarinet, brass and percussion resolved into a piece called 'Sing, Sing, Sing' taken from the Swing Era of the 20th Century. England began a basic pattern, letting Tanya assign colors and motion to each instrument. The display danced before them, a small crowd gathering to watch. The music may have been old, but England noticed several people tapping their feet and swaying to the rhythym.

The piece finished and the display faded; Tanya blushed at the patter of applause from the watching crowd.

"Can we go somewhere else?" she asked. She handed the bartender her credit chip; he deducted the cost of the drinks, returned the chip.

"Certainly," said England. "But since you paid for the drinks, allow me to take you out to dinner."

Tanya smiled.

"I'd like to change out of uniform into something more comfortable," she said. "Are you staying on planet?"

"No," said England. "But I'd like to get out of uniform myself."

"I'm staying at a hotel here at the port. I'll meet you at the transporter platform in - say, an hour?"

England agreed and Tanya walked away, glancing over her shoulder to flash a bewitching smile at him.

England spent part of that hour accessing the library computer learning about swing and jazz. On a whim, he had the computer produce formal evening wear for the period, an outfit called a tuxedo. The black and white outfit did look good, although somewhat dated. The cummerbund, or sash that went around the waist, would conceal a communicator and phaser quite nicely.

Tanya's eyes went wide when he materialized; the transporter officer was barely keeping his laughter in check. England stepped down from the platform, gestured his apparel.

"What do you think?"

"You look... exquisite," said Tanya.

"So do you," he said.

She had chosen a silver-blue gown that accented her figure; it was slit to accomodate her tail. A white shawl rested upon her shoulders. England offered her his arm; she placed her hand upon it and they left.

"What would you like to eat?" he asked.

"Seafood, if we can find a place," she said.

England had been considering himself fortunate; he hadn't seen any of the senior officers from the Potemkin. And then he caught a glimpse of Ramada entering the restaurant, accompanied by Ter-Lum. He coughed, nearly choking on his food.

"What's wrong?" said Tanya.

"Nothing," he lied.

Tanya looked at him suspiciously.

"We're not followed by my security officers, are we?"

"Uh, no. I just spotted my Captain coming in."

"Oh. Did she see you?"

"I don't th--... yes," said England. Ramada had nodded in his direction. He shook his head to warn her off, then turned back to Tanya.

"She won't interrupt. And she couldn't have recognized you."

Tanya smiled; on shore leave, as England had discovered, she insisted on a certain degree of privacy, for she kept her personal affairs seperate from her role as captain. He wasn't as secretive about such matters, although he was learning caution. The Potemkin had a grapevine that reached clear through the ranks of both enlisted personnel and officers. His last shore leave, during which he'd spent several evenings with an attractive blonde lieutenant from Starbase 16, had been a much-discussed topic among the junior officers and cadets.

Ramada had picked up his meaning. She stayed away from then, even managing to keep Ter-Lum from noticing.

I'll have to thank her for that later, he thought.

They spent the night together in Tanya's hotel room, which was clearly superior to the beach. There was no sand, no seawater spray, no ocean breeze to interfere with their lovemaking.

England knelt before her to place the body necklace around her waist; the fire opal glistening in the subdued light of the room. He ran his hands upwards along her sides as she stood, brushing her nipples with his fingertips. Tanya placed her arms around his neck, drew him closer to steal a kiss.

They slept in each other's arms, knowing that the odds of their meeting again were slim.

One of the drawbacks of being a Starfleet officer, he thought.

As the next day progressed, Tanya became more distant, drawing back into the shell of her command persona. After a quiet lunch, she announced that she needed to return to the ship early.

"Then it's goodbye," said England.

"For now," she said.

"What do you do with stowaways on the Invincible?"

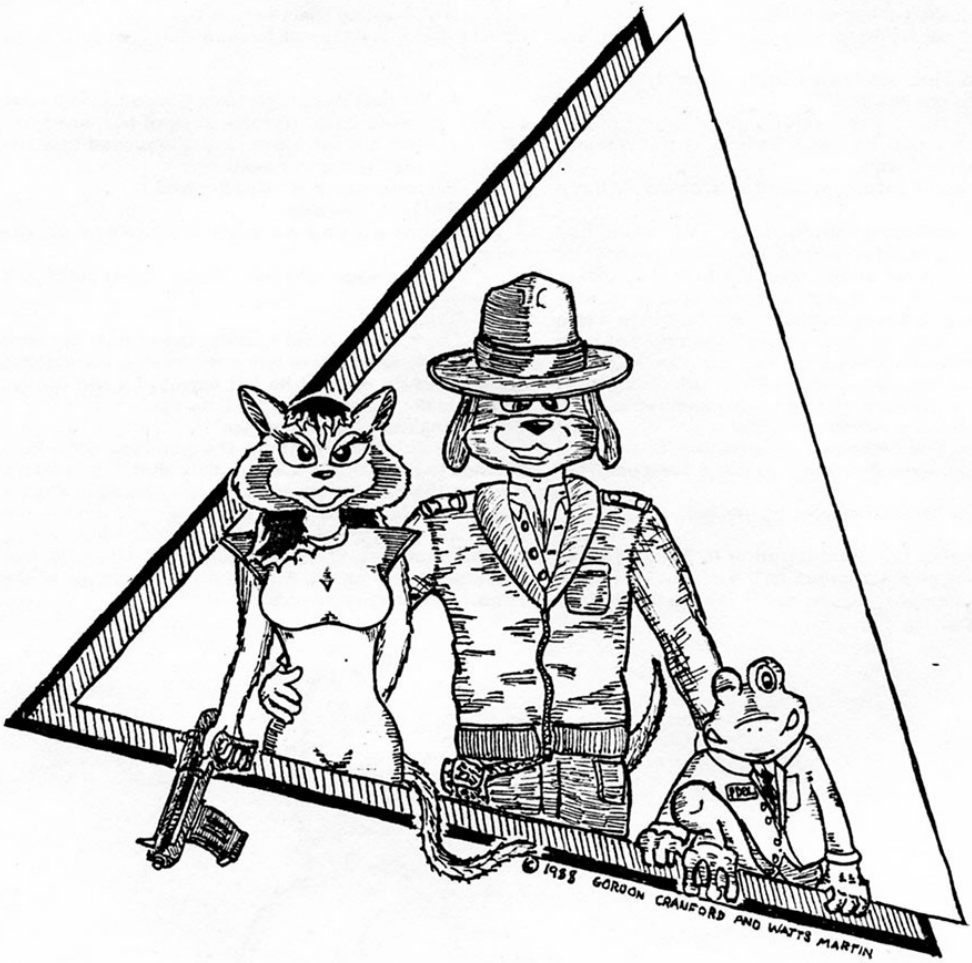
"Tony, please," she said, "don't. Saying goodbye is hard enough."

"Sorry."

She glanced about quickly, then threw her arms around England and gave him one last kiss. He watched her walk away; already he felt empty. Taking out his communicator, he contacted the Potemkin.

"England. One to beam up."

He didn't know about the package until he'd returned to his quarters after his duty shift. It was from a store on the concourse, one that specialized in display holograms. He unwrapped it carefully, held it up to the light. It was an image of Tanya, her dark hair falling loosely over her shoulders. She wore a soft, close-fitting top that accentuated her figure. A small note slipped out of the frame. It bore only two words: Love, Tanya.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NIGHTFIGHTERS
by David D. White

The enemy pilot was good. Ground control was updating his course every few seconds as he zigzagged across the sky, but I was on his tail and soon I'd be in range. He was trying to be careful, trying to make sure no one caught him. But there's no place to hide in the sky. Even at night.

I was closing slowly, keeping on his base course in case he turned to a new heading suddenly. In a few moments he would be close enough to see by the fading moonlight as he again crossed my path and I would take my shot. That's shot, singular. If you miss, he'll twist away and maneuver so that you'll never find him again. This was the part of the hunt I was not very good at. Waiting for the Fox to wander into my sights. Waiting for the shot.

Flyers don't see much of the enemy, just his machines and installations. I'd only seen the Vul in person once. Last year when some prisoners of war were put to work repairing a battle damaged runway. They look like one of us wearing a fox costume.

My proximity sensor chirped, telling me that I was coming into range. There was the dim outline of a Vul transport crossing my nose. He was a good distance away, so I decided on a missile attack. I banked with him and lined him up in the gunsight as best I could. No active search radar to alert him to my presence. I set the missile radar to "delay". It wouldn't switch on until after launch, when it would be too late to evade.

The shot looked as good as it was likely to get, and I keyed the launch trigger. The missile leaped from the rack, the flare from the engine killing my night vision for a moment. I started to search for the Vul so I could confirm the kill on camera. I counted the seconds. Four, three, two, one...

Damnation! I missed him! He must have turned just as I launched, and the radar seeker never picked him up. I swiveled my head to try to pick him up again. No luck. The launch would have alerted him. He could be anywhere by now.

The first rays of the sun were beginning to lighten the sky. It signaled the end of the night's flying. Time to go home.

I met the rest of the squadron, all six of them, a short distance from the field. We would approach in a tight, precise formation then peel off into line for landing. We flew our missions solo, so this was the only formation practice we got. Besides, we wanted to impress the daylight pilots. We landed in crisp thirty second intervals at Whualerap Air Base, named for the nearby town and the plantation on whose land it was built. In the manner of all soldiers far from home, we had our own name for it: Wheels-Up Air Base.

In debriefing, I reported on the flight. Some civilians ask why we have to report right after a ten hour mission, instead of getting some rest. Simply, the longer you wait, the more likely you are to forget details. And small details can be very important.

I caught a ride to the officers', or "O", club. They always had a big feed waiting for the nightfighters. Half breakfast and half dinner, someone coined the term "brunch" to describe it. We gobbled down a truly excellent meal and talked shop.

A crew bus took us back to our quarters, an isolated knot of single occupant pre-fab shacks called "hooches" for reasons lost to antiquity. By now there was no conversation among our weary band of aviators. Only an overwhelming desire for sleep. With a few parting words, we retired to our respective beds.

It is a true luxury in a military organization to not be awakened by an alarm cr reveille. To just open your eyes and begin your day is worth an extra hour's sleep. I showered, laid out my flight suit and generally made ready for the night. I was almost ready to go when I heard the first of the day flight scream in over the field. In a couple of hours, I'd be up there instead. In the dark. Looking for something to kill.

Long ago, they say, my ancestors used to sail at night from the trees. First to find seeds and nuts. Later, as we grew, we needed more nutritious food than that. Then we glided to find other creature's throats. Sasabish is the formal species name. In the Old Tongue it meant "flying squirrel", but we call ourselves the Volan. Everyone mispronounces Sasabish.

We shared our home world, Shiryo, with the other tree squirrels, the Asida and the Ajidamo. From its soil life burst upward in its forests and outward across its meadows. Such a world seems too good to be an accident. And there are those think that may be the truth. Iroko (a gas giant or a star that failed to ignite, depending on which astronomer you asked) was a great shadow in the sky by day, its vast infrared output warming us when it came between our world and the suns in winter. And on summer nights, its rainbow colored clouds flooded the woods with warm, diffuse light.

When we turned our first telescopes on Iroko's other moons and saw signs of life, and later, civilization, we assumed they would be like us. They were. All of the Ryo, the inhabitants of Iroko's moons, had evolved from rodents. We were more like each other than any of us dared hope before the first space travel. So, the several species of the Ryo established the Iroko Accords, which govern our relations with each other. We minded our own business, and expected any serious trouble to come from outside the Ryo worlds as we began to explore and colonize. Again, as we assumed, so it came to be. Sometimes being right can be a real pain.

I finish combing my hair and start in on my tail. I'm meticulous about that. After all, I'll be sitting on it all night. I run my fingertips over the bare spot under my tail. Shaved in a rough circle from the underside of my tail to halfway down my buttocks, I decided there was no need to shave again tonight. We call it "bailout tonsure". A couple of years ago, a pilot got caught in his seat-back when he ejected. Tore his tail half off. Not that it mattered. It also caused him to tangle his parachute. So, instead of putting a shield or brace on the seat, the higher-ups recommended we shave our butts. I wonder if any of them has ever put a patch of naked skin on an ice cold seat cushion.

It does have advantages, though. I've watched female pilots surround themselves with every young buck in the officers' club with one provocative flip of the tail. Some of the guys tell me that it has a similar effect on the ladies.

I see I'm a bit late, so I quickly finish dressing, grab my map case and head out the door. The bad thing about being deputy squadron commander is that you have to be first for everything. First to Plot & Weather to get the mission profiles, first to see the boss with any changes, first to the briefing to post the orders. It cuts into your free time.

I hear it as I walk towards operations. A J-56 coming in, making a low, growling sound, his left engine trailing a thin stream of white smoke. Turbine bearing failure. Another of "Marc Palti's Go-Aheads", as they've come to be called. Go-Ahead. Make lots of tight turns above 450. Your oil pump won't be able to keep up, your bearings will burn out, and you'll be lucky just to get home. This guy

was lucky.

Hmmmm. We use the same engines as the J-56. I wonder if we can scrounge the right engine out of that ship. Ingrid has one that's almost due for overhaul and I'd like to keep her from having to fly our spare craft.

Once inside the Operations building, I slide through the curtain into the darkened Plot room. Here, controllers watch everything that flies, every ground and sea movement. Listen to every communication. Illuminated only by the readout screens and backlit transparent plot panels, they seem to be the devoted players of a vast, team video game. Or the puppeteers above a gigantic play where their hollow performers clash and kill and fall.

I've gotta stop thinking like that, especially right before flight. I'll screw up royal from thinking too much when I should just react. Thinking about the situation board that covers the east wall is bad enough. It tells me the same thing it has every day. We're losing this war.

The situation board shows the entire war zone on Tatana. Every week our lines have been pushed back a bit more. Oh, we give 'em six flavors of Hell in the air. We're about even in space. But a war like this is won on the ground. By pushing the other guy off a piece of dirt, standing on it, and calling it your own. And for the last ten months the Vul have been doing all the pushing.

And it's stupid. The Vul and the Ryo found this moldy spitwad of a planet about the same time. Set up research stations. Established towns and farms. The usual pre-colonial stuff. We got along OK. Then someone stepped on someone else's tail. Made claims. Drew lines. The usual political crap. Counter claims. Ultimatums. Troops sent in. High tension. Finally, someone cranks off a shot he shouldn't have and here we are, three and a half years later, still shooting. And for what?

I've read all the suitability reports on Tatana, and flown over what passes for the good parts. The plateaus and coastal plains are less than ten percent of the land mass. As for the rest, what isn't straight up-and-down mountains is jungle so dense you can't even walk through it. The largest native life is a 25 pound cat that appears to be completely arboreal. The mineralogy is unimpressive. We're in the middle of trying to establish colonies on three better worlds, worlds where no one is fighting us. The Vul are developing at least as many more on their own end of the sky. So why, for Faith's sake, are we killing each other? We don't even have an official name for this turd, just a grid number. The ground troops first called it Tatana. A corruption of an Old Tongue word that meant "useless".

I'll tell you why we're fighting. The REAL reason.

This is our first conflict with a non-Ryo species. Our governments want to establish who's boss, who's dominant, on a one-to-one basis. That's why we're a long way from a maximum effort here. Low intensity conflict. Fighting with understrength units and insufficient equipment. No one at home is seriously concerned if we win or not. As long as we get some respect. In short, it's a giant, lethal game of King-of-the-Hill.

Stupid, stupid, stupid.

I check with weather forecasting first. No sense doing anything else if it's going to be too sour to find the enemy up there. But tonight its CAVU, ceiling and visibility unlimited, for the next twenty hours, the length of Tatana's day.

Next, I pick up the mission profile from Air Plot. This tells us where we go, what the enemy is expected to do, what we are planning to do, and who we're supposed to shoot. It hasn't changed much in three months, except to move slowly back across the territory. Tonight there is something new. Something interesting.

I head down the hall to Tactical Analysis. Chrystal sees me come in from across the office and waves me toward her desk. I perch on the corner of the desk and wait.

Chrys is a real charmer. An Ajidamo, her ancestors were tree-dwelling squirrels like mine, but not Gliders. She has that bright red hair, redder than her fur, so common among her people. And that wonderfully expressive tail. As she walks toward me, I can see it relax and flick lazily from side to side. She's glad to see me.

"Hi, Marc. What brings you to the Nitpicker's Retreat?"

"Hello yourself. I got curious about this profile. Plot says half the Vul air defense lit up in the southeast. We weren't anywhere near there. Now, we have these holes in the prowl sectors. What's the real story?"

She looked at the profile a moment and checked her data terminal. "Here we are," she said. "It was more than half their defense. The whole 4th and 5th defense zones went on maximum alert. Intelligence thinks they lost a high value ship and thought it might have been shot down."

"Sounds like a load to me. How about you?"

She wrinkled her nose at me and smiled. "Of course it's crap. I talked to the night Sky Boss when I came in. Something flew over the Vul low and fast and scooted out to sea before they knew what was up."

"Ahhh." This made sense. "So we're leaving some room in the air to sucker him into our ground defense. Or is it to give him operating room? You don't think it's someone's secret project, do you?"

"Naah. No one in Plot knew about it. They said it was making weird signals, too."

"Weird?"

"Yeah. Millisecond pulse. Digital in the voice band. That kind of stuff. Besides, it'd be pretty stupid to get shot down by your own side in the name of secrecy."

"I don't know," I said. "I've seen some championship grade stupidity out here."

Her tail rippled its full length and she backed me up against her desk. "I've seen some championship stuff out here, too."

"Stop that, Chrystal. People are going to talk."

She pressed close against me. Almost nose to nose. Damn, she smelled good! "Awww, don't worry about my reputation," she said, "I don't have one."

"Everyone has a reputation. It just changes from time to time. Now unhand me or I'll scream." I smiled when I said that. She felt good, too.

She smiled broadly and sat behind her desk. We'd been indulging in office foolishness and occasional dinners since shortly after she arrived last year. It was never serious. Never any intimacy, or even a sign of desire. Always light and a lot of laughs.

I have never figured out why I chose that moment to kiss her for the first time.

She was sitting there, as I'd seen her a hundred times before, her tail smooth and still, looking up at me and waiting to say goodbye. I leaned down and kissed her, quick and full on the lips, and said "I gotta go fly," and went out the door without looking back. For the first time in my career, I didn't really want to fly.

Senior officer quarters were near wing headquarters. Our squadron commander had been moved there when he was promoted. The call of duty usually prevented either of us from getting any sort of meal, so I would pick something up from the Ops cafeteria and bring it along with my report.

My hands were full, so I kicked gently at the door marked P. Varso, Lt. Col. Pete was an Asida, the third of Shiryo's native squirrels but of the more numerous gray variety. He was also a top-notch pilot and a good friend, but command of the squadron had told on him. The responsibility wore him down like a visible weight. I almost never saw his tail out of its tight military curl. He was not the party person he once was, and had a tendency to go by-the-book instead of following his own instincts. He'd

been in command for five months and I'd hoped he'd grow into it.

He opened the door and said, "Donuts again?" He took the box from me.

"Got spineberry juice, too." I said, taking a cup and pouring with a flourish. "Drink up, it's good for you. Make your fur thick."

"My fur's already thick. I need something that'll make it stand on end."

"This may do it, Skipper," I said, handing him a profile. "Someone's playing footsie over the combat zone." I told him what I'd learned from Chrystal.

"Yeah, it all fits," he said. "I have to attend a briefing at wing HQ, so have everyone relax. I should get the latest poop on this low flying sucker. I'll bet it's either an independent Combined Species Pact observer, or the Vul are cutting a deal to get more aid from the CSP."

"But why would they crank up their defense for an ally?"

"Now, now," he smiled, "mustn't question the strategists. We lowly warrior types wouldn't understand the answers, anyway."

"Ain't it the truth." I muttered.

Pete caught the disgust in my voice. "What's been with you lately, Marc? You've had a nasty word for everything but flying for a couple of weeks now." He sat and refilled my cup with juice. "Want to talk about it?"

I didn't. But I knew if I didn't, Pete would worry himself into an ulcer. Nothing concerning himself ever caused him a bit of worry. But if he thought anyone under his command had a problem, he'd be troubled until it was made right. With us about to go up, I couldn't leave him with another unresolved difficulty.

"I guess it's the way the war is going," I told him. "We're not going to win. No one at home is willing to commit the resources needed to win."

"That could change, Marc."

"It won't. This is like a pushing match between two kids on a playground."

"You could be right. And if so, it's vitally important that this other kid learn quickly that he can't push us around without taking some lumps. You see, this other kid's a lot bigger than we are."

"Come on, Pete. We outnumber the Vul."

"True. But we do not outnumber the entire Combined Species Pact. And they are watching this conflict very closely. Not just to see who wins, but how they win. And, ultimately, how they make peace."

"Now you're talking. That also brings us back to our unknown visitor. If he's CSP, do we get to knock him down?"

"And now you sound like a proper fighter pilot. I suppose I'll find out at the briefing whether he's a legit target or not."

"It'll be slim pickings tonight, otherwise. A pair of last quarter moons up and a weather front moving in." I chomped down another donut.

"You're going to get fat if you keep that up," Pete said.

"That's not fat, that's patagium. Vestigial loose skin. Can't help it. I was born that way."

Pete poked my stomach just above the belt line. "Loose skin? That's as solid as Grandfather's tree."

"OK, OK. You got me." I shrugged. "I like to eat."

Pete chuckled. "You're going to end up on the FatRodent Program yet."

"Come on. I always make weight."

"Sure. I saw you're last physical. You cleared by two pounds. Seriously, Marc, it's not good for you."

"Can't be worse than those elmwood sticks you're always gnawing."

"Don't change the subject. I use a very mild brand. Besides, my teeth keep growing, unlike certain meat-eating squirrels I know of with fixed growth teeth," he said, pointing at me. "The dentist will buff them down if I don't chew on something, and I hate that."

I gave him a malicious grin. "Should have arranged some carnivores in your ancestry."

"Not if they have to look like you."

"Ahhh. Ooooh. Nasty there boss." I placed my hand over the mock wound to my heart.

"Mullph!" Pete said around his donut. "Gotta go. See you at briefing." He hurried out the door and sprinted toward headquarters. I couldn't have kept up with him on a bet. Maybe I should try to lose a few pounds.

The briefing room was made to hold about sixty people. A regular daylight squadron has between twelve and sixteen flyers assigned. We had seven, including Pete and I. That's not because of losses. We couldn't find room in the air for more. Can't be watching out for a wingman when you can just barely see your target.

My back was to the door as I posted the routine daily orders. Although the room was silent, I didn't hear the footsteps of the squadron's mystery lady until she was halfway down the aisle.

Almost all of the Michi connected with the military were in medicine or the chaplaincy. It was rare to find a mouse in a combat job. I'd never even heard of one as a pilot.

But there was Haru-Ake. At the ripe young age of thirty-three, the squadron Greyhelm, our oldest flyer. She also had ninety four combat missions, eight victories and the Praetorian medal for dragging the navigator out of a burning attack craft that cracked up on our field. Then going back for the gunner.

Why did someone from a culture that advocated peaceful, quiet acceptance of whatever came your way, that espoused spiritual enlightenment as the solution to worldly woes, get herself into the most lethal work in a loony's war? I asked her once. She smiled, blushed furiously, and changed the subject.

Donnaly Bowen and Haley Favour, who were the next to appear, were as close to "sprogs", new combat pilots, as we had. You had to have forty missions just to be considered for nightfighter duty, as well as pass a battery of tough exams and flight tests. These two had done it in minimum time. They were full-throttle hotshots and as sharp as they came. They were both twenty years old.

Favour was the bad boy for the entire wing. An inveterate body builder, martial artist and heartbreaker, he was fond of working out on the athletic field in a state of undress which exhibited his physique, his golden brown fur, and the thirteen black and white stripes that distinguished his family of the Tamias, the ground dwelling squirrels.

It was widely believed throughout Wheels-Up A.B. that Favour had never left the "O" club without a female on his arm. It's also said that the one time he struck out, he took home a female chrysanthemum bush just to preserve his reputation. ("She was potted and she didn't say no," was his explanation.) I was there and I know that's not true. It was an azalea.

No one could have picked an odder companion for Favour than Bowen. One of the sub-surface dwelling Fosser (what you would call prairie dogs), he had all the reserve and intellectual acumen his people are renowned for. He once confided that he hoped for a career in politics when the war was over. If he kept hanging around with Haley Favour, he'd end up as a convict. Still, he seemed to be the only one who could restrain Favour's wilder moments. And they appeared to be genuinely good friends.

Of course, some things penetrate even the most cultivated reserve. When I saw Donnaly's ears twitch and his head swivel towards the door, I didn't need to see the doorway to know who was entering.

Flight leader Ingrid Lytle. Our only flight leader, as all of us together barely constituted a flight. She was a tall, shapely, big-busted, no-nonsense woman. One of the Norge volunteers. The Norge's ancestors were rats with prehensile tails which they passed on to their descendants. Smart to the point of cunning. Very disciplined. Almost insanely industrious. More than a little cynical. There are twenty billion of them on their home world living on twenty eight percent of the land in urban metroplexes of fantastic size. Now, if they had decided to join the war effort... But they wouldn't mobilize for an idiot show like we were in here. Not stupid. Smart.

Ingrid joined up just after the fighting started and had the second highest number of combat missions, 221, right behind my own 238. She all but marched down the aisle and sat next to Ake. Girl talk. She didn't even acknowledge the moon-eyed Donnaly.

You have to understand about these two. This is a bit off the subject at hand, but since Pete isn't here yet, I'll tell you about it.

Ingrid was on one of her rare but thorough benders in the "O" club when Haley attempted an unusually crude pick-up. One thing led to another and Ingrid decked him in classic fashion. Made me proud just to see it. (This was his azalea night). Once we revived the amorous chipmunk, and we were sure he was all right, Donnaly offered to escort the sloshed and now remorseful Ingrid to her quarters.

They must have taken the long way back, because even though I stayed to see that Haley, his plant, and his throbbing skull would survive, I arrived at the squadron area just after they did. I couldn't help seeing what went on. Ingrid's hooch is right across from mine. It seemed that Donnaly was about to take his leave when, by my Faith, he stole a kiss. Ingrid stared at him for a good three seconds. I was rooted where I stood. I was certain I was about to witness a murder.

Instead, she gave a delighted squeal, clamped him in a grip that was half hug and half headlock, and dragged him bodily into her hooch.

From the sounds that emanated from her open window, they screwed each other nearly to death.

So now, Donnaly is smitten, Ingrid is unsure, a bit embarrassed, and trying to pretend nothing has changed, and the rest of us are waiting to see what happens in the next episode. Hell, I know she likes him. I wish she'd admit it and not leave the poor guy hanging.

Now I beheld the face I can't help but smile at. Beneath his traditional and unauthorized lucky plumed hat comes Emile Ransom. My wingman when we were in daylight fighters, my drinking buddy on any number of binges, and my best friend.

What's he like? Think of Haley as a Volan grown old and crafty and you'll be close to the mark. Grown old? At twenty five, he was a year younger than I was. Yes. Grown old. War ages people terribly fast. Emile would have had more missions than I, but he spent four months in the hospital when shrapnel from a near miss almost killed him.

He stepped up behind me and looked over my shoulder. "Are we getting new assignments?"

"No, just some sector changes. So don't say hello."

"Hello, and did we get knocked back again?"

"I'm just fine thanks and don't be nosy. The Skipper is getting the latest now."

He lowers his voice as if the room were bugged. "So what goes on with you and Captain Santheweja anyway?"

"Huh? Chrystal? What are you talking about?"

"I saw Amy from Intelligence on the way over. She said Chrystal has had a silly grin on her face since you left and has shown an uncharacteristic tendency to stare out her window toward the flight line."

"Oh?" is all I can think to say. Emile smiles at my befuddlement.

"I don't know what you did," he says, "but if it makes her act dizzy, you're doing the right thing." With that, he saunters to his seat. He doesn't walk, my friend Emile. He may stroll, wander or charge, but he never just walks.

And what am I to think of his bit of news? I warned Chrys about her reputation. This little tidbit is probably all over the wing by now.

When I get back, we'll have to have a serious talk.

I had just finished handing out the profiles when I see Pete coming down the hall toward the briefing room. As he crosses the threshold, I call the room to attention.

This is the moment where I get an idea of how everyone is really feeling, my status check. If someone is slow in standing, slouching, looking tired, it may be time to send them off planet for R&R, or even back to a day squadron. Night flying is hard on you physically and mentally. Then, too, that look could just mean they're coming down with a virus. No flying, but nothing serious, either.

On the other hand, if someone stands too stiffly, looks too, well, too military, that's a warning as well. Shows they're trying too hard to control themselves. Too much tension. Too much stress. That can be real dangerous. It definitely indicates that a change is in order.

Tonight, they rise smoothly, gracefully, and stand relaxed, alert, calm. That comes from great self-confidence. Condition Green. No problems with the job at hand.

"OK," says Pete as everyone sits. "Here's what we're gonna do."

Pete gives them the run-down on the newcomer to the battlefield. I put the new prowl sectors up. Big gaps for our whatsit to run in. Pete and I take the end sectors. His against the mountains, mine against the sea. Ake in the center. Ingrid on her left, Emile on her right. Haley next to Pete and Donnaly next to me, where we can back them up. After all, they still amount to sprogs.

"The last word on Mr. Treetops," Pete said "Is: if he's over the Vul, just track him. If he comes close to our lines, swat him."

"Is there any chance this guy is a strike craft looking for something high value of ours?" Emile asked.

I looked at Pete, and he at me. Leave it to Emile to find the angle everyone else missed.

"We'll check that and let you know before launch," Pete said. "That's all."

He didn't have to tell us the next move. Everyone with a source in staff planning, Intelligence or Plot headed for a phone to see if we could get a line on this unexpected possibility.

I went to the vacant command conference room, where there was a security phone. Wouldn't want anyone to eavesdrop on our plans.

"Hi, this is Captain Palti, 27th Fighter Intercept. Is Captain Santheweja around?"

Chrys came on the line. "Hellooo, you," she crooned sweetly. I wondered what I'd started. It was just one kiss.

"Chrys, I need to know if we have any unusually high value items on the ground tonight. We thought the low-and-speedy might be after a ground target."

"I'll check," she said, and put me on hold. She sounded disappointed. In seconds she came back on the line.

"No, Marc. Nothing unusual. Not even anything they might mistake for high value."

"OK, thanks Chrys. And Chrys?"

"Yes?"

"I need to see you when I get back. Can you meet me for the post-flight brunch tomorrow?"

"Of course, Marc. You guys put on the best breakfast on the base."

"Fine. see you there."

On the crew bus heading to our ships, we exchange information from our various sources. The consensus is that he's not ground hunting. At least we've eliminated that possibility.

"I've got an idea on how to take this observer," says Haley. "He holds a straight line course. So just get in front of him and let him fly right into your gun."

I shook my head. "That's not dangerous, but..."

"GO-AHEAD!" They all said in unison, laughing.

"Am I so predictable?" I asked innocently. I knew full well I was on this score. Besides, a laugh at this point can cut the pre-flight tension.

"Anyway, Go-Ahead and try it. But if you're off just a bit, he'll blow past you and you'll never make a shot. If you're really off, he'll hit you head on before either of you can evade."

"Any suggestions on how to approach him, Captain Palti?" said Ake. I wished she wouldn't be so formal, but she just won't use first names with me or Pete.

"Not off hand. Emile, you're the resident tactician."

"Easy," Emile answered. "Stay at cruise altitude and let the ground controllers track him. As you said, Haley, he runs straight and low. If he heads for you, parallel his intended course, let him pass you, and drop on him from behind. Classic night attack."

Our aircraft were kept in shelters. Not just for protection from attack or weather, but to keep them cool and reduce their infrared signature. We used every trick we could.

I waved goodbye to the others as I got off the bus. Even though we would be the only ones flying, I wouldn't as much as catch a glimpse of them until morning, when we came home.

I looked at my J-61 from the open shelter door as the last sunlight faded. Sleek and painted a deep blue-black, with her chisel shaped nose and stubby trapezoid wings, she was the very vision of death in the air. The nose concealed the most sophisticated passive sensors the Ryo had ever built. Each of the six Shriek missiles under the wings could pursue a target for up to 12 miles. Once one got a whiff of you, there was no getting away. Most of the time. And, of course, there was the gun. I liked to work in close. I'd accounted for most of my fourteen kills with the gun. Fourteen foxtails stenciled on the nose of my ship. One more, and I'd probably be rotated out of the war.

Why did the thought of that disturb me?

My crew chief, Chief Tyler, did the walk-around inspection with me. A crew chief feels that he or she really owns that ship. They only let you have it to go flying once in a while. They'll tell you every little quirk the craft has, every bit of "character" that ship displays. They expect it, and you, back in one piece. While you're buzzing about, the ground crews sweat out the flight. Waiting for you to bring their baby home, like a father whose daughter is out with a fellow he doesn't really approve of.

Tyler helped me strap in and I started the checklist. I also checked my callsign for the night. Rollingdell 4. Once I took off, I wouldn't use it again until I again approached the field, or unless challenged by one of our ground stations. You could Go-Ahead and talk on your voice channel, answer the ground controllers when they gave you a target, but once the Vul heard you and knew there was a nightfighter about, they'd give your sector a wide berth.

As the checklist scrolled up my left hand display, I started the twin engines and watched the performance readouts on my right display. Electrical, hydraulic, navigation, fire control, fuel. Everything checked. The checklist ran to completion, I closed the canopy, pulled the safety pin on my ejection seat and waved it at Tyler. I did that so we both knew my seat was "hot" and so Tyler knew I was ready to go. He gave me the "hold" signal as Pete taxied by, then waved me out with a snappy salute. I returned the salute with all the panache I could manage in the restricted cockpit and turned to follow my leader.

We took off in pairs, except for Ake. Pete and I launched first. R.H.I.P., and also we had the farthest to go to our sectors.

I got my clearance and pulled up beside Pete. We exchanged salutes and pushed the throttles forward. In less than a minute, we were off and splitting up for our respective sectors. The rest followed at 40 second intervals.

It would take about 45 minutes for me to reach my prowl sector, three hundred miles away. I conserved fuel, didn't rush it. I was well over our own territory, so I went high. Caught the light of the sun again, creating my own personal sunset with my altitude. I skimmed and surfed through puff-ball clouds turned gold and crimson and violet by the fleeing sun. Here the beauty of this world finally showed. Here, for a moment, I felt at peace.

I thought about flying this anachronism in a time of starships and easy interstellar travel. Sure, you could bring a spacecraft down into the atmosphere. But they're clumsy, slow. They belong in space. To win a ground war, the forces need support from the air. If you're going to muck about in the air, you need machines fueled with combustibles, driven by turbo-compressor engines, and carried by wings.

You need aircraft.

Transport aircraft to resupply your ground forces. Strike aircraft to attack enemy positions, headquarters and supply lines. Fighter aircraft to keep your enemy from doing the same thing. My kind of aircraft.

I was approaching my sector, so I started to "quiet down". I pulled the circuit breaker on my voice transmitter. I would hear the plots from the various observer stations. They didn't expect an answer, except perhaps an occasional fireball in the night.

I also popped the breaker on my search radar (Go-Ahead. Use search radar at night. The last thing you'll see is a radar-seeking missile coming through your windshield).

Next, I laid out a random patrol pattern (Go-Ahead. Fly nice, lazy circles waiting for targets. And before you know it, someone will lift up your tail and shove a missile under it. They have nightfighters, too).

The combat zone was thick with surface-to-air (SAM) defenses. I set the auto pilot to vary my altitude between 4,160 and 3,870. Not too high, to stay below the minimums of the big SAM's, not too low, to stay out of range of the little but effective hand-held SAM's. Kept changing altitude between odd amounts to confuse everybody.

Finally, I cut off most of the other active sensors. They also make detectable "noise". The enemy would like nothing better than to take a shot at you, especially at night, when you had little chance of finding where it came from.

But cut out better than half your detection gear? Absolutely. People with backgrounds such as the Vul and ourselves had raised camouflage to a fine art. Regardless of the spectrum you look in, you probably wouldn't see a thing until it was too late.

However, sometimes, the living eye picked up the the little oversight, the unexpected anomaly, that gave the show away. That's when the strike craft went to work.

And if the strike craft were Vul, it's when I went to work, too. My own eyes, my own hands, my own wings. Going for the kill.

And tonight's special. Find the snooper and give him a 25 MM enema.

TO BE CONTINUED

Furry Data Files
by Steve Corbett
Subject: Zebra Team
Item: Character Histories

Lt. Matt Johnson

Matt's father was an officer at the time of the New Order takeover. Given the choice to join, he publically accepted while privately resolving that he and his descendants would work to overthrow the tyrranical New Order from within.

Matt is one of the few human officers to see front line action in the Arab-American conflict. He inspires great loyalty in his troops, and this may be part of the reason he was assigned to Zebra as a punitive measure. Matt's attitude toward his people is that they have feelings and personal needs. This is a source of conflict, as the prevailing attitude among human officers is generally to treat morphs as anything from robots to furniture. (i.e.- "Their not real, like us.")

Cpl. Heather MacNeil

Heather is a special case. Not being a product of first-generation tank breeding, she did not receive the subliminal mental conditioning/mind control programming used to ensure total loyalty to the state and to any human officer.

Heather's father (legal) was a retired officer. Her mother was a custom-built personal companion, (Sex toy, derogatory term). Her father wanted a child, but was unwilling to marry. So he had contacted a friend who owned a male Skunkmorph and had Heather's mother bred. Raised as his daughter, Heather thinks like a human and is consequently very independently minded. An interesting footnote is that Her mother took her aside at a young age and taught her all about sex. Therefore, though still a virgin at her first sexual encounter, she was quite knowledgable and skilled. Since morph's cannot legally be freed in New Order America, Heather's father pulled some strings to get her trained as a medtech.

Cpl. Angela Tanaka

Angela was custom-built as a bodyguard/lover for a female officer. While in an officers club a drunken major tried to make advances on Angela's captain/owner/lover. Despite being repeatedly rebuffed, he refused to stop until told bluntly to "go to hell." This enraged him and he tried to attack the woman with a beer bottle when she turned her back. Angela saw it coming and reacted as trained. Pushing her captain aside, she threw a knife and spilled the obnoxious major's guts onto the floor.

This caused something of a problem, as the dead man was of greater rank, Angela could not be excused for killing him. Yet, she had done exactly as trained and expected to do. Therefore, it was decided that she would be assigned to Zebra team, and if she survived the standard one year term, would be permitted to return to her much-loved captain. She is permitted visits by her owner, and hopes to take Dave with her when she gets out.

Prvt. Denise Brown

In the morph education program there is a course called "Sexual appreciation." Remember that old cartoon of a sex education class with a professor standing over a bed, lecturing and the students in lab coats crowding around taking notes? That's what a SexApp class is like.

Denise has the distinction of not only getting the highest marks ever in the class, but actually standing in several times as an instructor!

Denise was assigned to Zebra team as punishment for "accidentally" nicking a range officer in the butt during a live fire exercise.

Denise enjoys sex of every type, and has gotten into trouble several times daydreaming when she should have been paying attention to what she was doing. She has been flogged for this only once, and a notation had to be made on her record that such punishment "Appears counterproductive, as the individual seems only to become more aroused by being paddled on the backside than she was before, which caused the problem in the first place." Her pain tolerance level is extremely high, and she is known to have a liking for "rough stuff".

Sgt. David Fitzgerald

David is perhaps the most tragic character of Zebra team. While assigned as a clerk in a Quartermaster's office, he was approached by an officer he did not know. The man struck up a friendly conversation and invited Dave to his house that evening for dinner to continue their talk.

All was well, and Dave had a good time until the man invited him into the bedroom. At this time Dave became uneasy, and his fears were confirmed when the officer told him that he wanted to have sex with him. Dave refused, and the now angry major overpowered him and raped him.

One of the few rights a morph soldier model has is the right to have sex on their own terms. What happened to Dave is still considered a terrible crime. The Major filed a report that Dave had "attacked him," and as this particular individual had not only a reputation, but was larger and stronger than Dave, he was assigned to Zebra team instead of being executed for assaulting a superior.

Dave's practical joker facade is a cover for the pain and anguish, the horror and humiliation he feels, and strangely, guilt as well. He will never speak about why he was sent to the team. The others generally assume he did one joke or prank too many. They may eventually find out the truth.

Sgt. Ron Ngomo

Ron is the oldest member of the team, and the only one other than Matt to see action in the Arab-American war.

Trained as an Underwater Demolitions specialist, he is very knowledgable in the subjects of explosives, small arms, infiltration, sabotage, sniping, and a number of other subjects.

A veteran soldier who takes responsibility for the lives of his subordinates very personally, he is suspected of "fragging" a less experienced captain who ordered Ron's team (against Ron's advice,) into a situation that turned out to be an ambush. During this fight the entire team died while Ron, watching through his monitor, continued to argue with the young captain. It was never proved that Ron had anything to do with the gas explosion that killed the aforementioned junior captain, tbe circumstantial evidence was enough to make high command a little nervous of this individual who seemed to show more independence of thought than a properly "indoctrinated" morph soldier should possess.

Ron is a computer whiz, and does a lot of the base programming duties.

Height and Weight Comparisons

Ron is the tallest, at about 6'2", has brown eyes and is of a muscular, (though slim,) build, about 200 lbs.

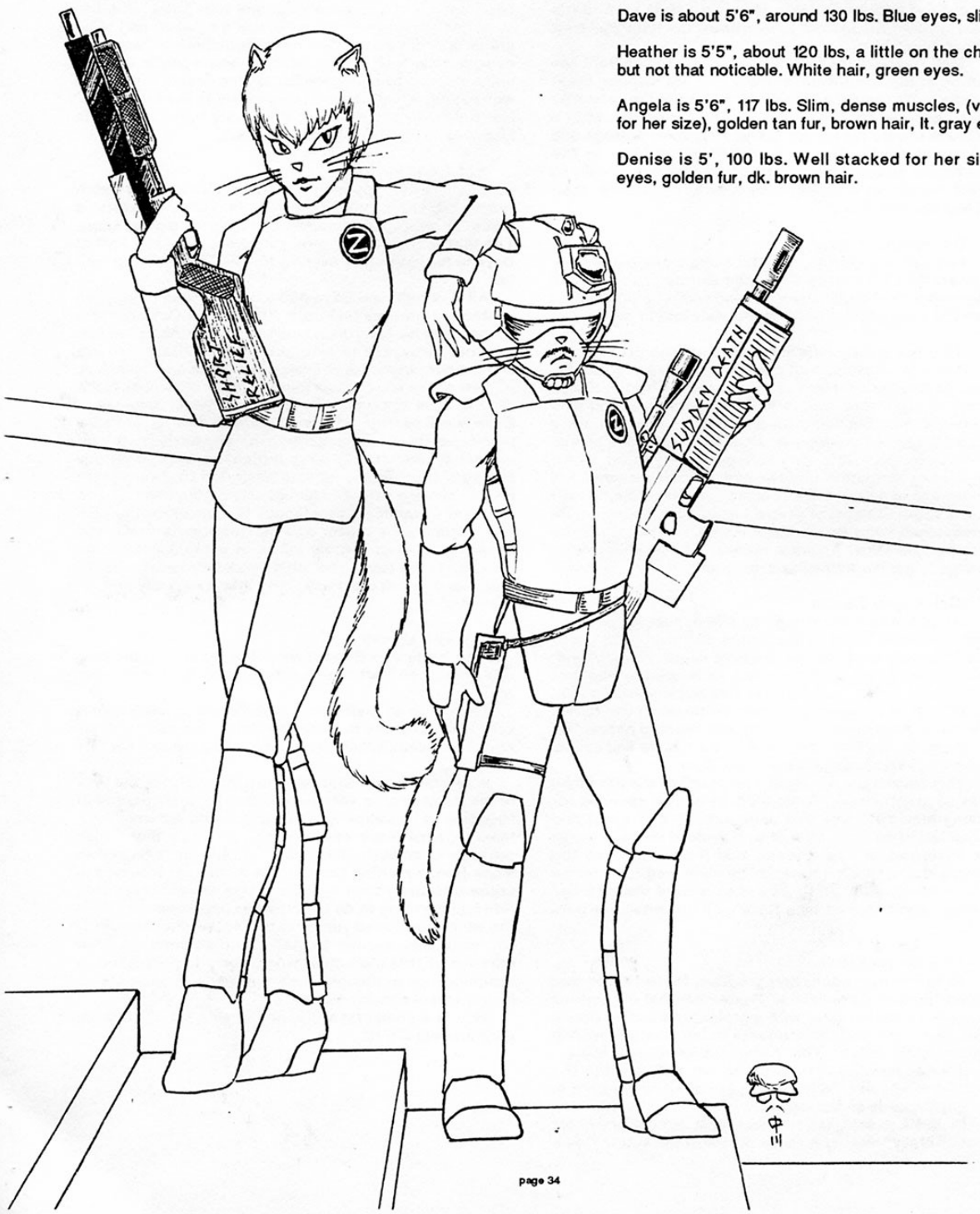
Matt is next in line, being about 5'10", brown hair, green eyes, moderate build, About 165 lbs. (Matt is rather unremarkable looking, a very average person).

Dave is about 5'6", around 130 lbs. Blue eyes, slight build.

Heather is 5'5", about 120 lbs, a little on the chunky side, but not that noticable. White hair, green eyes.

Angela is 5'6", 117 lbs. Slim, dense muscles, (very strong for her size), golden tan fur, brown hair, lt. gray eyes.

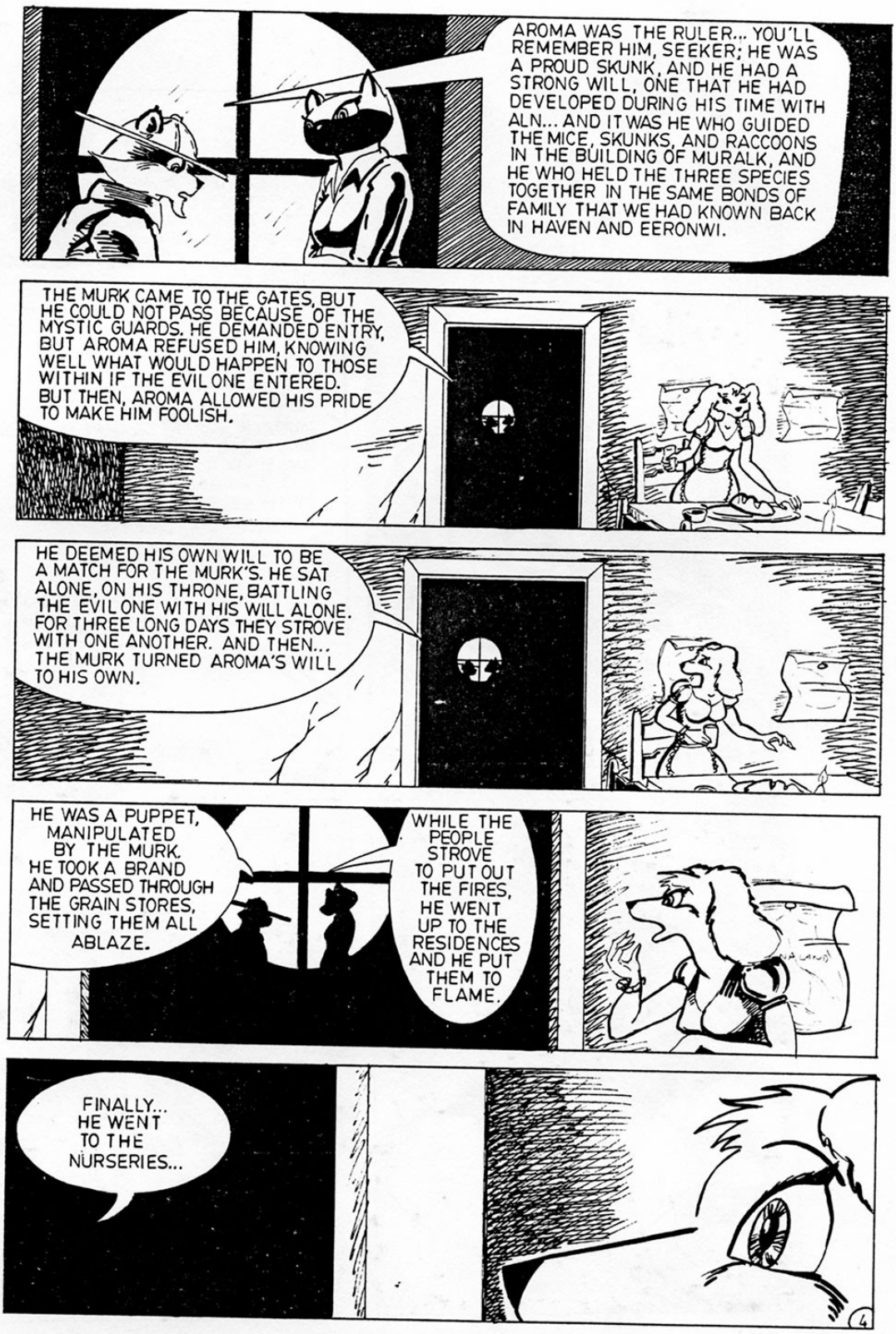
Denise is 5', 100 lbs. Well stacked for her size, brown eyes, golden fur, dk. brown hair.



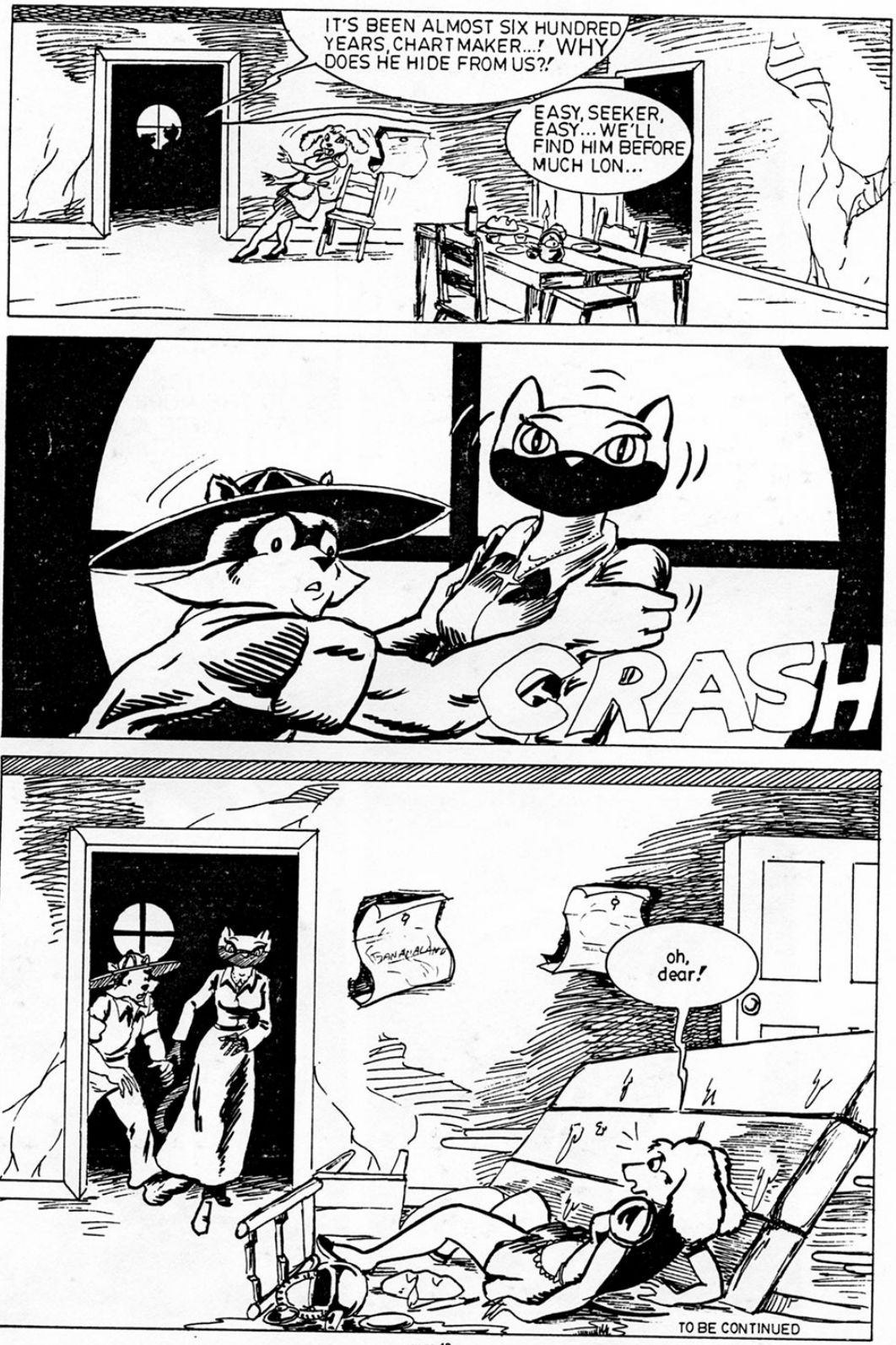
SEEKER'S QUEST
episode two:
WEEP FOR MURALK
..SO YOU CAN SPEAK THE LOCAL LANGUAGE, SEEKER?
YES, THOUGH I HAVEN'T THE PROFICIENCY AT IT THAT YOU HAVE, CHARTMAKER. I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEW TONGUES THE CHILDREN HAVE DEVELOPED.
WELL, WHY DID YOU GIVE THE INNKEEPER SUCH A HARD TIME IN THE OLD SPEECH?
I'VE FOUND IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO LET OTHERS THINK I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THEM.
©1984 Chuck Melville

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT MURALK?
FROM THE BEARS. I HAD BEEN TRAVELING IN THE LANDS FAR TO THE NORTH OF BRUINSLAND...
...FOR IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN MY BELIEF THAT KAZ WAS SOMEWHERE TO THE NORTH... AND ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS I FOUND A LUSH GREEN WOODLAND THAT IS STILL WILD AND UNTOUCHED ...WITH A LONG AND BEAUTIFUL SEACOAST... IT WAS SO PEACEFUL THERE!
BUT I STILL COULDN'T FIND ANY TRACE OF HIM... THOUGH, FORTUNATELY, I DON'T THINK EVEN THE EVIL ONE HAS BEEN IN THIS LAND YET...
...THEN...ONE DAY... I HAD A FEELING THAT SOMETHING DREADFUL HAD HAPPENED...!
THE SAME FEELING WE HAD THE DAY EERONWI WAS DESTROYED!
2

IT TOOK ME THREE MONTHS TO JOURNEY BACK SOUTH TO BRUINSLAND, BUT SOME FEW YEARS MORE FOR THE NEWS TO FINALLY TRICKLE ON UP TO US.
YOU WERE KIN TO THOSE WHO LIVED THERE, CHARTMAKER... DID THEY TELL YOU OF HOW IT HAD COME TO HAPPEN?
I HAD JOURNEYED TO MURALK ONCE. I WAS AMAZED BY ITS LABYRINTH CORRIDORS, AND ITS VAST, DEEP HALLS. THERE WERE MANY COLORFUL TAPESTRIES ON ITS WALLS, AND THE STONEWORK WAS UNSURPASSABLE. THE PEOPLE WERE PROUD AND CLEVER, BUT FRIENDLY AND GOOD-HEARTED SOULS.
MURALK, FORTRESS THAT IT WAS, WAS EVERYTHING THAT HAVEN AND EERONWI WERE CENTURIES AGO; A PRODUCT OF THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO LIVED THERE. A MEMORIAL TO LIFE ITSELF!
THAT'S WHY IT WAS DESTROYED.
IN BITS AND PIECES; I KNOW THE TALE NOW.
3


AROMA WAS THE RULER... YOU'LL REMEMBER HIM, SEEKER; HE WAS A PROUD SKUNK, AND HE HAD A STRONG WILL, ONE THAT HE HAD DEVELOPED DURING HIS TIME WITH ALN... AND IT WAS HE WHO GUIDED THE MICE, SKUNKS, AND RACCOONS IN THE BUILDING OF MURALK, AND HE WHO HELD THE THREE SPECIES TOGETHER IN THE SAME BONDS OF FAMILY THAT WE HAD KNOWN BACK IN HAVEN AND EERONWI.
THE MURK CAME TO THE GATES, BUT HE COULD NOT PASS BECAUSE OF THE MYSTIC GUARDS. HE DEMANDED ENTRY, BUT AROMA REFUSED HIM, KNOWING WELL WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THOSE WITHIN IF THE EVIL ONE ENTERED. BUT THEN, AROMA ALLOWED HIS PRIDE TO MAKE HIM FOOLISH.
HE DEEMED HIS OWN WILL TO BE A MATCH FOR THE MURK'S. HE SAT ALONE, ON HIS THRONE, BATTLING THE EVIL ONE WITH HIS WILL ALONE. FOR THREE LONG DAYS THEY STROVE WITH ONE ANOTHER. AND THEN... THE MURK TURNED AROMA'S WILL TO HIS OWN.
HE WAS A PUPPET, MANIPULATED BY THE MURK. HE TOOK A BRAND AND PASSED THROUGH THE GRAIN STORES, SETTING THEM ALL ABLAZE.
WHILE THE PEOPLE STROVE TO PUT OUT THE FIRES, HE WENT UP TO THE RESIDENCES AND HE PUT THEM TO FLAME.
FINALLY... HE WENT TO THE NURSERIES...
4

MURALK WAS LIKE A FURNACE. MOST DIED BECAUSE OF THE HEAT AND SMOKE. THE MURK IGNORED THE FEW SURVIVORS. HE SUCEEDED IN HIS EVIL DEED; HE HAD DESTROYED MURALK WITHOUT EVER PASSING ITS GATES.
DAMNATION TO THE MURK! AND CURSE ALN FOR DESERTING US! WHERE IS HE? WHY HAS HE LEFT AND FORSAKEN US? WHY?! WHY?!
SEEKER! CALM YOURSELF!
5


IT'S BEEN ALMOST SIX HUNDRED YEARS, CHARTMAKER...! WHY DOES HE HIDE FROM US?!
EASY, SEEKER, EASY... WE'LL FIND HIM BEFORE MUCH LON...
CRASH
oh, dear!
TO BE CONTINUED

ON THE PLANET SPIFULA, VANA AND ZETA WORKING AS MERCENARIES FIND THEMSELVES FACED WITH THE FEROCIOUS MEAT EATING ZELOW MONSTER ....IN
CLEAN GETAWAY
MAXX "88"
WHEN WE GET BACK, I'M TAKING A LONG HOT SHOWER
WE SHOULD PUT ALL THE MONEY WE MADE FIGHTING INTO NEW EQUIPMENT
AAAKK TO THE RIGHT WATCHOUT!
POW
SMACK
CRUNCH!

WOW THAT WAS CLOSE. THAT THING SMASHED MY BIKE
THAT THING IS STILL OUT THERE! KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR IT. I'LL TRY TO FIX MY BIKE WITH YOURS FOR PARTS.
HURRY UP FIX THAT THING I'M GETTING NERVOUS
BE QUIET AND PAY ATTENTION
I AM PAYING ATTENION
ARRR
PAT
SHIT
POW
AHOWWW YUK VANA YOU BITCH! I'M COVERED IN BLOOD
HEY... NICE TEETH!
HAVE A HAMBURGER FOR ALL THIS KETCHUP?
ANYONE WANT A FUR COAT?
I'M WASHING THIS RED STUFF OFF. COME ON IN THE WATERS NICE
YEAH THAT LOOKS PRETTY GOOD!
RUP

YOU ALWAYS said YOU WANTED A FUR!
I'VE GOT A FUR FOR YOU HUNNY!
SPLASH
ILL FIX YOU BABY!
BITCH!
THE BIKES FIXED! WE SHOULD BE GETTING HOME SOON. NICE TEETH!
"LOOK MOM NO CAVITIES.!
THE END

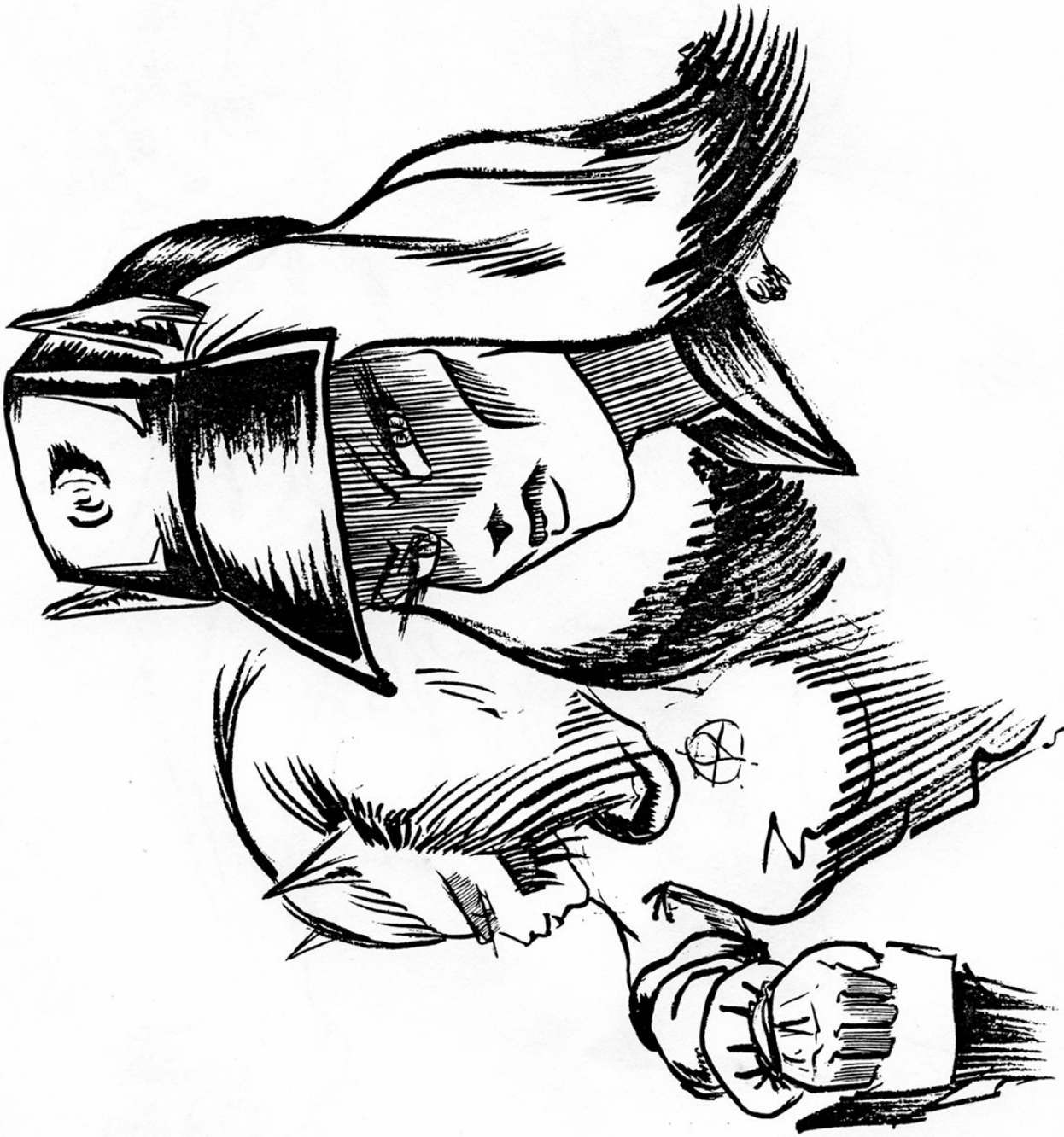
Furry Art Showcase

Part 2

page 45

BILL
'88

BILL
FITTS



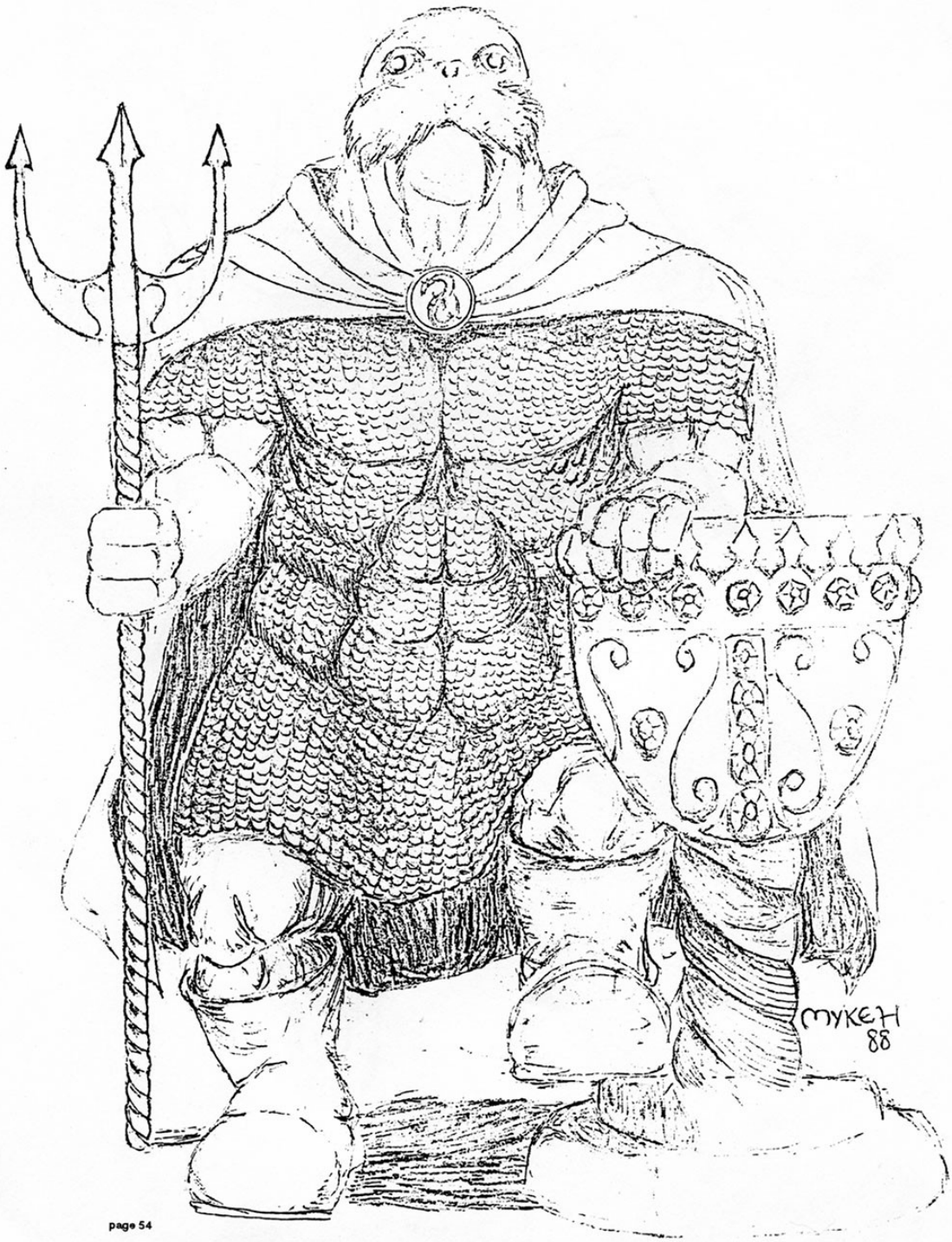
MONIKA© 88

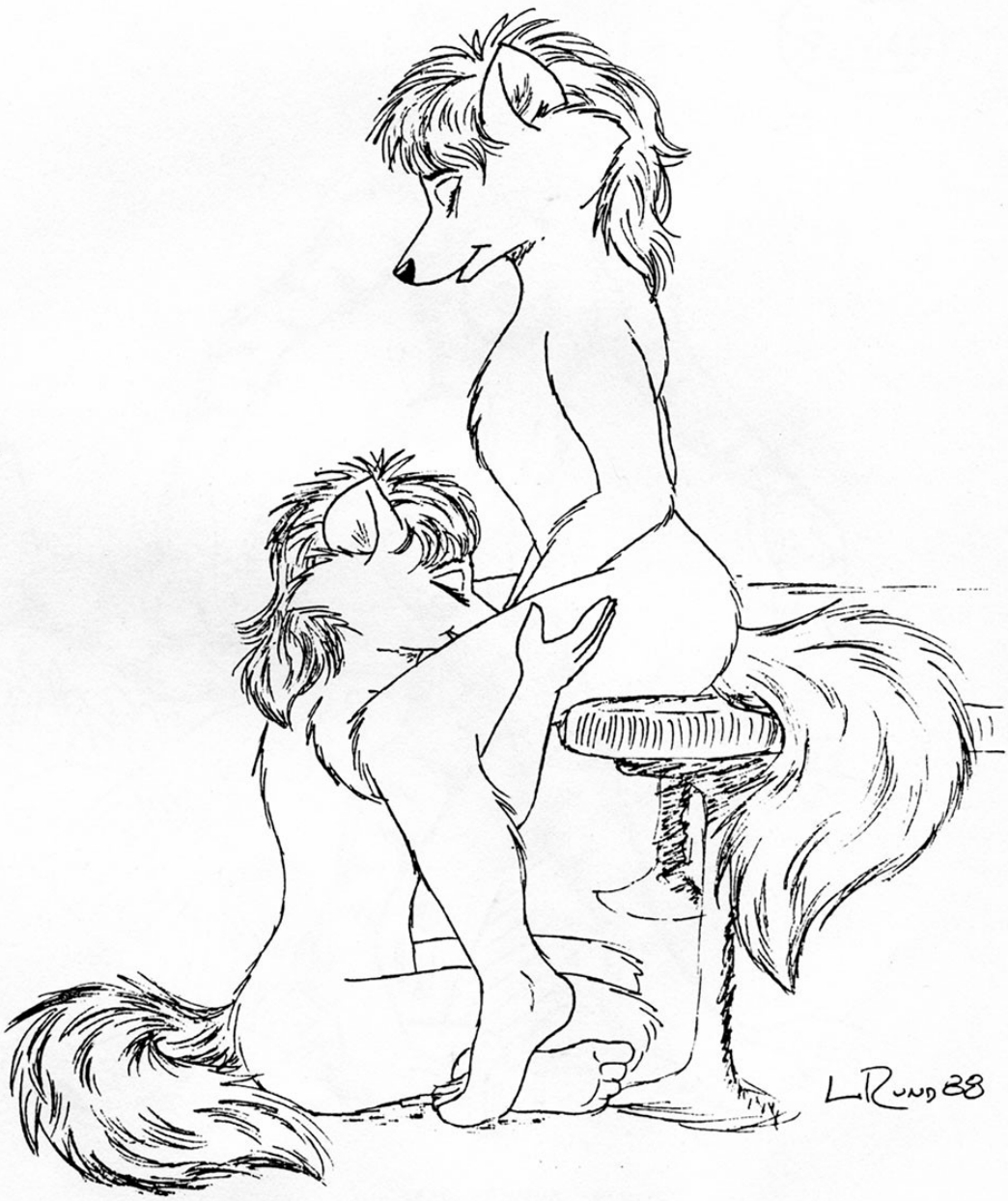
CAT'S ANGEL
Monika
©1988

BUNNIES?

Monika©88

·TRITON·

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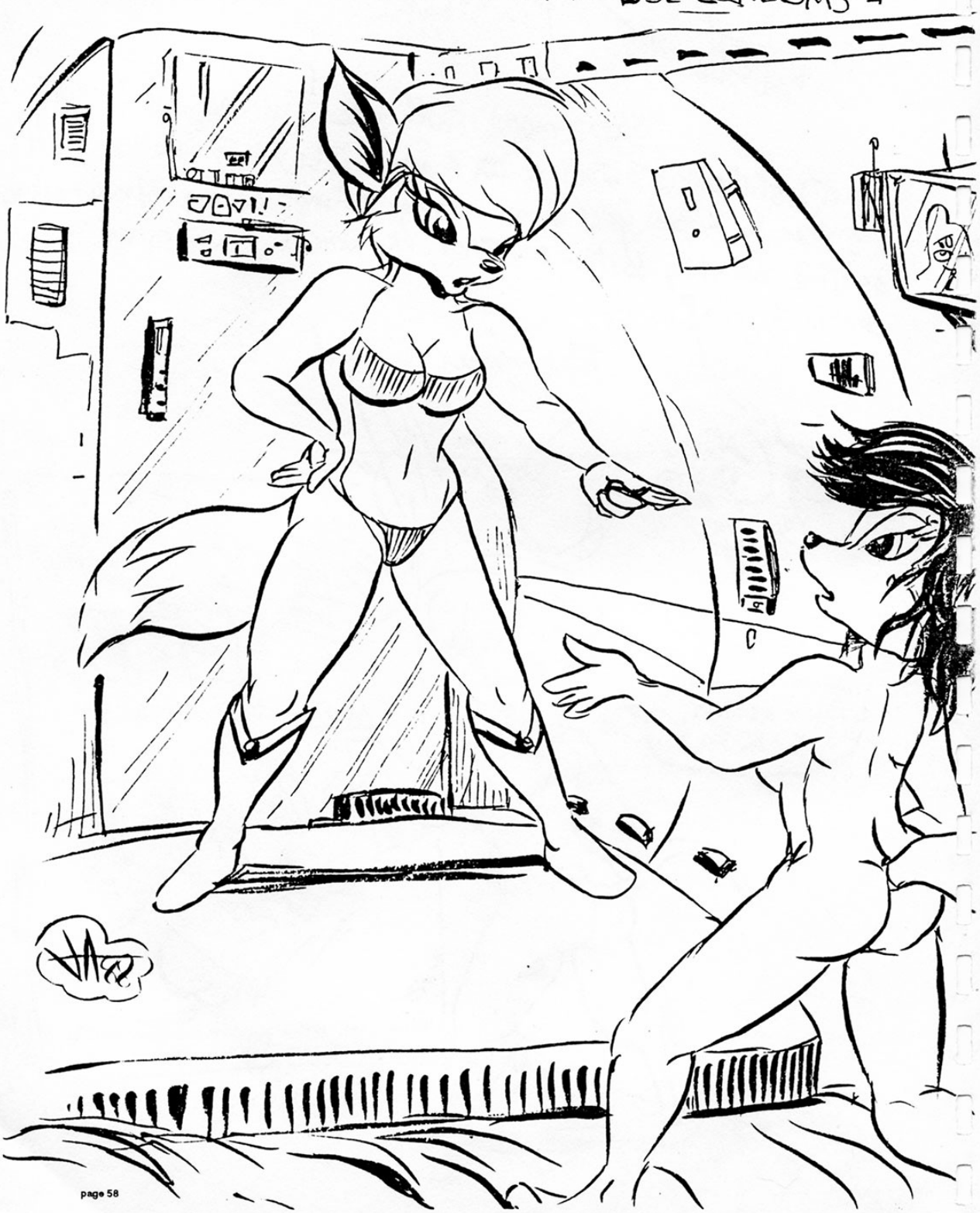
"REE PENNEL"

Hello KARL!

Some more stuff for "FURVERSION" - THAT IS IF IT'S STILL CALLED THAT. I SORTA FANCY "CLUB FUR" myself I sincerely hope you don't change things along w/ name/such as the naughty bits - don't let the voices of censorship dominate you!

Until next time your friend,


FOX FORCE ALERT!
- PROTECTION IS TOP PRIORITY - USE CONDOMS -

Wanted: Desparately seeking video tape copy of BBC series "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" as seen on PBS. Will pay for charges to copy. Need VHS format. Contact Dana Chick at (408) 779-8968 or at address on Address Page.

Your ad can be HERE!
Furversion accepts classified ads for printing on an irregular schedule based upon available space. Send your ad (which can be a personal ad in character, or a reality based ad, but NOT comments) to FURVERT-ADS, care of the address on the inside front cover of this issue.

Interested in 10 ads per issue for $.65 + postage (Usually 2 oz worth)? Want to converse (in character) with other furries, aliens, and whatnot? INTERCEPTED, the Multiversal Partyline is alive and well, and available from 12536 Short Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066. Ye Ed. Ps. Ads are 55 char/line, 5 lines.

Xanadu!
This comic (now in the 3rd issue of its five-issue run) is very much the comic of interest to Fur Fans.
Available from Thoughts and Images. Ask for it at your nearby Comic Store.

Kyim's Scratching Post BBS
A BBS for the discriminating Fur Fan. Features The Fox's Paw, a bar and grill catering to all of Furry Kind and the Tyel Hyatt Regency a luxury hotel catering to the same.
415-452-0350
300/1200 Baud - 24 hours
PCPursuit accessable

For Sale:
One Way ticket from San Francisco to Charlotte, NC via Alanta, GA on Eastern Airlines. Leaving Sept. 28 in the morning.
Ask $150 or Best Offer
Contact Kyim Granger or Patrick Kingsley at the address on the address page (or via voice phone).

Katrina & Kris:
You really should keep a better eye on Robert! I mean, Oranges? Nun's Habbits?
What in the world? And not letting us in on it!
Char'An Siber

Help! I'm being held captive inside a Laser Printer!

Subscriptions and Ordering Information

As of September 1988

Subscriptions:

A donation to the zine of $16 or more will make you a subscriber. From this $16 or more, as each issue is published and sent out, I will remove the money neccessary to send you the issue. The average issue runs $0.95 to print and $1.05 to ship plus the cost of the weight of the inserts. So, the average issue will cost $2.00. That means if you subscribe with next issue and it is the average size and weight and there are no inserts, $2.00 will be subtracted from your account and you will have $14.00 left of your subscription.

The amount left in your account each issue will be printed on your mailing label in a special code. Using the above example, your label would show: YH14X00. This means: You Have $14.00 Left. If there was insufficient funds to ship an issue to you, then you will be notified by postcard with a request for the funds.

As you can see from the above figuring, the $16 will, on the average get you eight issues of the 'zine.

As to contributors to an issue. Well, you pay only postage for any issue in which your contribution appears. So in the above example, you would have $1.05 subtracted from your account and your label would read YH13X95.

By the way, You will NOT be charged shipping weight for inserts, only for the issue, and the envelope it is in, nothing more, inserts are free to subscribers.

Back Issues:

Issue	Cost	Pages	Issue	Cost	Pages	Issue	Cost	Pages
1	0.50	5	5	3.00	29	9	2.50	28
2	1.00	16	6	3.00	38	10	4.00	46
3	2.50	25	7	3.00	36	11	?	? (This issue)
4	4.00	47	8	5.00	72			

Cost of Shipping is included in all prices for back issues.

Products:

Fur Fandom Calendar '89 - In planning stage, no price at this time.	
T-Shirt, Design 1 (Cassie with Flag) Limited Quanity	$9.00
T-Shirt, Design 2 (R-Rated Cassie) Limited Quanity	$9.00

Please include $1 for shipping on all T-Shirt orders.

Please specify size (XL, L, M, S) when ordering T-Shirts and a perfered color. Choice of color is NOT garenteed!

Inserts:

If you would like to have something shipped out with a copy of Furversion, send me 100 copies (or the original and $3.00 for coping costs per each) and $4.00 for shipping costs (that's $0.04 per page per person). Comic book sized items usually weigh about 2 ounces and so cost around $0.40 each (or $40.00) for shipping. If you are sending me flyers for a convention and are not on the convention committee, I suggest contacting the committee and seeing if they are willing to fork out the $4 to $7 for the extra circlation of their flyer.

All checks and money orders should be made out to

Karl Maurer
621 Boulevard Way
Oakland, CA 94610

RUNNING WOLF
WHO LIKES TO DANCE

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